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**LALA LAJPAT RAI**







Lala Lajpat Rai

# LALA LAJPAT RAI

*The Man And His Ideas*

**PURUSHOTTAM NAGAR**

*Foreword by*

**T. N. CHATURVEDI**

Chief Commissioner

Union Territory of Chandigarh



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**TO**  
**MY PARENTS**  
**SHRI NARSINGH LAL PANDYA**  
**Raj Purohit of Nathdwara**  
**and**  
**Smt. INDIRA DEVI**  
**who are no more**





## Foreword

I am exceedingly grateful to the author, Dr. Purushottam Nagar for his kindness in asking me to write a foreword to his study of Lala Lajpat Rai. It is an honour, however, unmerited, which I greatly cherish. It was also considerate of him to have made his manuscript available to me which I read with both interest and profit.

Lala Lajpat Rai was one of the most colourful and conspicuous figures in the galaxy of our national movement. He was one of the triumvirate of 'Lal, Bal, Pal' of the Extremist fame in our freedom struggle during the first decade of the present century. He was in every sense of the term a self-made person and this was reflected in his utterances, style of working and approach to life. This gave him a sturdy sense of independence and of self-respect. He was not born with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth, but his parents with their own sense of values left a legacy of a sense of purpose, singlemindedness and the capacity for perseverance. The Arya Samaj also had tremendous influence on his mind. As he wrote, ". . . It was the Arya Samaj that instilled into me, love for my nation and that breathed into me the spirit of truth, of Dharma and of liberty. . ." He read widely and thus added to his intellectual and social awareness. He did not have the benefit of very sophisticated education formally, but it speaks highly of his immense quest for knowledge that despite limitations of the family background, prolonged residence in mofussil areas and active involvement in social and political life, his love for books and receptivity to ideas continued to grow. Lala Lajpat Rai's younger brother in his biographical memoir, has observed: "His personal library was so rich that whenever any bookloving Deputy Commissioner was posted at Hissar, he made it a point to see Lalaji's library." It was this spirit of self-education which led him to identify himself more intensely with the common people than many of the western educated elite leaders of his days.

After having joined the legal profession he attained both eminence and wealth. In Hissar while practising law, he was elected to the local municipal board as a member and tried to contribute to the good of the public. In a way this was his first direct experience of public life as well as the prevailing political and administrative system. He shifted to Lahore as it was not only the political capital but also the centre of social, religious and cultural awakening of the region. Besides working energetically for the Arya Samaj, he organised relief work during the drought of 1897-98 and in 1900 in different parts of the country. He was invited to give evidence before the Indian Famine Commission. In 1905 when the district of Kangra was rocked by a fierce earthquake he rushed to the succour of the people. He wrote small biographies of Mazzini, Garibaldi, Shivaji, Swami Dayanand and Shri Krishna in order to provide inspiration and ideals to the young people in the country. He also started his journalistic career while in Lahore. The guiding star of all his work was the service to society. The learned author has graphically narrated the development of Lala Lajpat Rai both as a man and a leader of public opinion. It is neither necessary nor possible for me to mention the changing fortunes of his long and intimate association with the Congress, other organisations including Parliamentary activity and some of the other political stalwarts of the freedom movement. It would suffice to quote Gandhiji who said, "It is impossible to think of a single public movement in which Lalaji was not to be found". The wide spectrum of his field of interest and action gets adequate attention on the part of the author.

Lala Lajpat Rai had shot into political limelight by his open letters to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan for his opposition to the Congress and his changed communal stance. In the Congress session at Allahabad he made a mark as an eloquent speaker. His was a manysided personality. He looked at the life not in compartments but as a whole. His was a comprehensive approach to problems of the country. He was not only a man of ideals and ideas beating his luminous wings in vain. With his enthusiasm and idealism, he combined a rare genius for organisation and action. In the midst of intense political activity he started journals in English and Urdu, set up Tilak School of Politics, the Dwarkadass Library, Gulabdevi Hospital, the National

College at Lahore besides several orphanages. He was an admirer of the ideals of Gokhale and founded the Servants of People Society at Lahore broadly on the same lines as the former's Servants of India Society. It helped to prepare a band of dedicated public workers of eminence. Its role in the freedom movement as well as the social reform movement in the country is well known. Lalaji was a votary of boycott, swadeshi and swaraj. But to him Swadeshi was not only a negative political concept. Through the establishment of financial institutions like the Punjab National Bank and the Lakshmi Insurance Company, he gave the political aspiration a practical economic garb. The various aspects of his life as a social worker, a journalist, an author, a freedom fighter, an orator, an educationist and a builder of institutions have been well brought out in this interpretative biography of Lalaji's life and work.

Lala Lajpat Rai was not only a powerful orator but was also a prolific and versatile writer. He was not simply a publicist but also produced a number of books of lasting value containing his mature reflections on men and matters besides many fundamental issues as well as fleeting events of the period. He was also a frequent contributor to magazines and journals. According to his brother, "Some of his articles were published under the pseudonym of Izzat Rai and once when he was in jail he wrote an article under the pseudonym of Vidur." It is a matter of satisfaction that the author has quoted profusely from Lala Lajpat Rai's articles as well as the other important books.

In the writings and speeches of Lala Lajpat Rai an earnestness of purpose and fervent advocacy for the improvement of the national character and social efficiency are all-along reflected. According to him the individual self-seeking and parochial working had undermined the sense of social responsibility and led to political subjection and degradation. He, therefore, pinned great hope on the idealism and enthusiasm of the youth for the future of the country. His was a ceaseless effort and devotion to the "study of educational questions always with a view to their adaptation to the needs of India". Besides his active association with the educational movement in the country, he made a particular study of the educational institutions, ideals and methods in the U.S.A. and Japan which he visited and where he was required to prolong his stay for political reasons.

In his book "The Problem of National Education in India", he wrote with passion and perception as to how the national education should be suffused with social purpose, facilitate the emotional and mental growth of students, equip the students to shoulder the responsibilities of citizenship and help to promote the social and economic development of the country. He was a strong believer in and advocate of co-education. This indicates the element of both modernity and practicability in his mental make-up. Interestingly enough even Lord Curzon's Government invited him to give his evidence before the University Commission.

Though Lalaji was proud of the ancient values and past heritage, he was forward looking in social and religious matters. He stood for the eradication of evils that had crept in with the passage of time in the Hindu society and religion, as well as other institutions. His voice was for the equality of women and their emancipation from the thralldom of superstition and wrongful social practices. He was an articulate and active crusader against the evils of untouchability. For him there was no dichotomy between precept and practice. Lala Lajpat Rai had a rare catholicity of outlook on religion. His abiding respect for his religion in no way detracted from his regard for other faiths. He always wished that the spirit of tolerance and amity should animate all sections of Indian Society. It would be pertinent to mention that he even wanted his friends in the Arya Samaj to remember that the present day India was not exclusively Hindu and that "its prosperity and future depends upon the reconciliation of Hinduism with the greater *ism*—Indian Nationalism—which can secure for India its rightful place in the comity of nations." That underscores his governing approach to religion. He was quite rational in his approach to religious and social reforms. It would be unfair to consider him to be a Hindu revivalist. Himself conscious of such accusations, once he wrote while referring to the social philosophy of Tilak, "He was an orthodox revivalist, I was a social reformer." Not many people may be aware that like Tilak, he also wrote a small commentary on *Gita*, a book which has not only been a source of spiritual solace to the patriotic souls in the country but also of a philosophy for action during the fight for freedom.

Lala Lajpat Rai's political ideas and his conception of nationalism were naturally conditioned by the 19th century thinking and conditions in the country under the British rule. In his well-known work 'Young India' wherein he traced the development of the political movement and in his 'Unhappy India'—a well reasoned critique of Miss Mayo's 'Mother India'—he drew attention to our mental servitude, intellectual degeneration, economic exploitation, social backwardness, and loss of national character due to foreign rule. He referred to the theory of 'economic drain' and held the alien masters responsible for the growth of terrorism in the country and repression by the British Government.

In his 'Political Future of India', he observed: "The end is freedom to live. . . . according to our own conception of what life should be, to pursue our own ideals to develop our own personality and to secure that unity of purpose which would distinguish us from the other Nations of the world, ensuring for us a position of independence and honour, of security from within and non-interference from without". Though he was not an exponent of the cult of revolutionary methods as he felt they were not likely to succeed against the organised might of the British, he was an admirer of the revolutionaries who never hesitated to pay the supreme of their lives at the altar of the Motherland. For him the question of non-violence *vs* violence was not a question of principle but of tactics and strategy. Like Tilak, B.C. Pal and Aurobindo, he was critical of the methods of petition and prayer. When hardly thirtyseven, he wrote in 1902: "No nation was worthy of any political status if it could not distinguish between begging political rights and claiming them".

Lala Lajpat Rai became quite interested in the problems of labour in the country and presided over the first session of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1920. He also went to Geneva to attend the eighth International Labour Conference in 1926 as the representative of labour. He had opportunity to watch the labour movement in the U.S.A. and England besides forming friendship with some of the prominent Labour and Socialist leaders. He even mooted the proposal to establish the Labour Parliamentary Party in India to promote the welfare of the working class in the country. He was

also influenced by socialist thinking and writings apart from his personal association with some socialist leaders abroad. This probably explains his approach to social and economic problems. He was no Marxist believing in class struggle or Communist. But he was conscious of the role of imperialism and had developed a perspective of viewing the freedom movement as a global imperative. He had not only a keen sense of history but also broad social sensitivity. In this he reminds by his writings and utterances at times of Jawaharlal Nehru. As regards the menace of Bolshevism and communism on which the British rulers would harp, Lala Lajpat Rai retorted: "We want to avoid the evils of class struggle. The only way to meet Bolshevism is to concede rights to the different people of the earth now being bled and exploited. Otherwise the discontented and exploited countries of the world will be the best breeding centre for it. India must come into her soon, else not even the Himalayas can effectually bar the entry of Bolshevism in India. A contented self-governing India may be a proof against it; a discontented, dissatisfied, oppressed, India perhaps the most fertile field "

Lala Lajpat Rai as a nationalist stood not only for national cohesion and development but was also the advocate of justice and good for all the sections of society. As he said: "We are a friend neither of the landlord nor of the capitalist, we believe that the ryot and the working men in India as elsewhere are being exploited and robbed by the classes in possession of the means of production and distribution. We would wholeheartedly support any scheme which would open a way to a just and righteous distribution of wealth and land in India and which would ensure the ryot and the working man his rightful place in body politic." Lala Lajpat Rai showed a remarkable consciousness of the wider social forces operating in the wide world in his days. In his outlook on life he seemed to have combined the realisation of the need for social change and modernity in harmony with continuity and a modicum of stability for the progress of the country.

For Lala Lajpat Rai, the synthesis between resilience and feasibility according to changing compulsions of the political chessboard with the long-term objectives and the fundamental principle, was an essential part of political strategy. He has

sometimes been accused of changing his views and opinions. But this has to be seen in the light of the compulsions and requirements of the objective situation. He was not working out any system of social or political philosophy in a vacuum. It was in this spirit that he wrote in a letter to C.R. Das: "Politics is a changing game and I do not believe in any inflexible, cut and dried scheme good for all times and under all circumstances." Again, he wrote: "Non-cooperation with foreign rulers is the only right course for a subject people. . . . We are wedded neither to cooperation nor to non-cooperation. We must do what is best, practical and possible under the circumstances." (The People, July 26, 1925). When Gandhiji withdrew the non-cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incident Lalaji poured the agony of his heart in a memorable letter to him lamenting Gandhiji's decision since he felt strongly that due to his soaring idealism he had let down the people in their march towards their political goal.

Lajpat Rai was also one of the first among the foremost leaders of our freedom movement who realised the urgency and importance of creating public opinion in foreign countries in favour of India's fight for freedom besides arousing social and political consciousness in the country. The relentless propaganda that he carried on in spite of hardships and handicaps in the U.S.A. as well as in England against the British domination, is simply amazing. N.S. Hardikar was not only an eye-witness but also a comrade in this effort in the U.S.A. and Dr. Nagar refers to Hardikar's testimony and tribute to Lalaji. Notwithstanding his effort at political propaganda abroad he believed that "our struggle for freedom must be carried on in India . . . the freedom of the nation calls for blood; world history was written in letters of blood; let us crown our national movement with martyrdom". And Lala Lajpat Rai was always true to himself. Like Tilak he also brought home the importance of the political activity to the common people. It would be wrong to call his politics that of middle class only. His criticism of the agrarian measures of Sir Denzil Ibbetson, the scathing condemnation of O'Dwyer's regime, his participation in Khilafat and non-cooperation movement and the boycott of the Simon Commission were all intended to generate among the



masses a sense of comprehension and involvement in the issues facing the country.

While Lajpat Rai was in England as a member of the Congress delegation, he addressed a letter to the 'Westminster Gazette' criticising the apartheid and 'the exclusion of Indians from the self-governing Indians'. He pleaded for the removal of the colour bar and the revision of the British imperial relations both with India and the colonies. His interest in the problem of Indians in South Africa and other dominions was not a new one. On the appeal of Gokhale he had earlier donated a handsome amount to help the cause of the satyagraha in South Africa that had been launched by Gandhiji.

It is unfortunate that occasionally because of his deep involvement with social and political activity in his province and its special circumstances his claim for national leadership has been questioned and he has been dubbed as a regional leader. Even Sarojini Naidu while presiding over the Punjab Provincial Conference at Gujranwala in October, 1925 remarked that Lalaji had "no right to abdicate his peculiar and unchallenged position in the forefront of Indian Nationalism in favour of a smaller interest out of pique at the attitude of any other community". To interpret his life and activity in a narrow framework goes against his aspirations and endeavours as well as the impact that he left on the people's psyche and the political life of the country. We cannot forget that Lala Lajpat Rai emerged on the national scene when there were only inchoate manifestations of national consciousness of varying degree in different parts of the country.

Though the name of Lala Lajpat Rai is linked in the national history with Tilak and Pal as the leaders of the Extremists he was always a bridge-builder during times of crisis and strain, tried to apply a healing touch so that the edge of the struggle for freedom should not get blunted due to internal dissensions. Himself a man of principles, his effort always was to reconcile the differing elements so that the national movement was not disrupted. His mediatory role during the Surat split is a part of history.

Lala Lajpat Rai tended to be emotional in personal life or where the question of national respect was concerned but in his approach to day-to-day problems of politics he was quite pra-

etical. Strangely enough he has been criticised at times for being much too cautious and even faint-hearted for not going in for revolutionary politics because of associating himself with parliamentary activity. It has been alleged that after the assassination of Swami Shraddhanand his nerves were much too strained. At other times he has been accused of even being reckless both before his deportation due to agitation against colonization measures—a petty issue according to some and even when he agreed to lead in the boycott of the Simon Commission at Lahore and received injuries leading to his death. Unfortunately both these allegations are misconceived. Lalaji refused to avail of the police protection offered to him after the death of Swami Shraddhanand. Lalaji was a man of indomitable courage and fearlessness. At the same time he was conciliatory by temperament and exercised moderation all along in his public life. But he would never shirk any danger to himself while leading others. Temperamentally, emotionally and intellectually Lala Lajpat Rai was in tune with the people as is evident from the multifarious activities during his glorious public career. His life was all apiece. It was for nothing that he was affectionately referred to by all and sundry as “The Lion of Punjab”. The crown of martyrdom for the cause he always held dear was a fitting finale to his heroic life. In life Lalaji epitomised fearlessness and intense love of his country and by his death, he breathed a new life in the striving for country’s freedom.

The distinguished author has referred in detail to the reactions of Tilak, Sister Nivedita and many others to the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai. An eminent contemporary of his, Sachidanand Sinha who was not a political activist, in his reminiscences, wrote: “Although I was 36 years old at that time, the shock was so great that I went to bed without taking any food. Lajpat Rai was essentially a man of action. But he was not for violent changes either in the political or in the social fabric of society. He was on the side of order and progress”. The gross injustice of the action was realised by Lord Minto and the release was ordered. The correspondence between Lord Minto and Lord Morley bears witness to the respect that even his opponents had for Lalaji’s character and the spontaneous countrywide protest shows the affection and the esteem in which he

was held by his countrymen. Dr. Sinha, while summing up his qualities of character, observed: "Lajpat Rai never made a bid for an official smile, he never went back on his convictions. And so he had left to India the great example of his life, his unflinching courage, his spirit that faced persecution and suffering undismayed, his tireless beneficence, his splendid patriotism, and his unshaken faith in the ultimate emancipation of his Motherland". Where it was a question of his convictions, though all who knew him testified to his amiability of temperament and generosity of heart, he would not mind picking up cudgels and enter into controversy with his friends like Lala Hansraj and Pt. Guru Dutt in the Arya Samaj, Mahatma Gandhi about withdrawal of Non-Cooperation Movement, Pt. Motilal Nehru about policy of the Swaraj Party and even with some of his Hindu colleagues from the Punjab regarding the acceptance of the Nehru Report or boycott of the Simon Commission.

Sometimes Lala Lajpat Rai has been accused of being communal. What Mahatma Gandhi said more than once before as well as after his death about Lalaji's transparent nationalism would serve as an effective and standing refutation of such tirade. In his own right, he was however opposed to any attempts at communal settlement which might involve the sacrifice or surrender of the legitimate rights of the majority community. He had studied at length the causes of communal animosity in the country and did not believe that the nationalist public opinion could indulge in the game of "competitive appeasement" of any truculent minority. As regards the solution of the communal problem, he observed: "What we aim at is not the merging or the absorption of the one into the other, but the integration of all into one whole, without in any way injuring or lessening each group individually". It is known that he was not oblivious of the need for a definite and abiding understanding about the position which the different sections of the people should occupy in the future governance of the country. Along with Dr. M. A. Ansari and others Lala Lajpat Rai worked towards this end though unsuccessfully because of the prevailing climate of communal hostility. He was not in agreement with the view that the Hindu Mahasabha should field its own candidates in the legislatures as he did not believe in "a separate political existence" of the Hindus,

though he was for organising and strengthening them socially and economically. While pleading for the acceptance of the Nehru Report, though he was not there to attend the convention at Calcutta, he went so far as to say, "Those who will oppose it will practically oppose Swaraj and may be justly described as the enemies of India". His strong plea for the uplift of the Hindus did not conflict with the intensity of his desire for Hindu-Muslim rapprochement and amity. I also feel inclined to refer to an article by him published in *The Modern Review* after his death wherein he wrote: "In my judgement the cry of a Hindu or a Muslim Raj is purely mischievous and ought to be discouraged. The correct thing for us to do is to strive for a democratic Raj in which the Hindus, the Muslims and the other communities may participate as Indians and not as followers of any particular religion". This almost constitutes the last political will and national testament of Lala Lajpat Rai.

Viewed from any angle, Lala Lajpat Rai was a 'big man'. Physically a towering personality, he had a multidimensional assessment of his times and a unified social vision of the future. His burning zeal for freedom and ardent nationalism transcended all personal and sectarian considerations. Dr. Nagar in his study of Lajpat Rai and his contribution has brought many of the less known aspects of his personality and relationship with many other contemporary leaders and events. He has made extensive use of primary and secondary source material, both published and unpublished besides referring to the latest and relevant literature on various phases of the Indian freedom movement. The comprehensive bibliography bears eloquent testimony to Dr. Nagar's scholarship and industry.

During the last five decades since his death, it is a pity that no good biography of Lala Lajpat Rai has been published. We are still waiting for the publication of the late Lala Feroz Chand's biography of Lala Lajpat Rai among the Builders of India series, which was announced long back by the Publications Division. The present work not only gives a connected account of his life, basing itself on Lalaji's autobiographical writings and other material, but also delineates vividly his role in the national life and his contribution to the freedom struggle. It has thrown fresh light on men and events of on, exciting

period. Dr. Nagar as a political scientist has also examined his ideas and ideals, views and thoughts relating to different aspects or themes and has also tried to identify the connecting links in his thinking and philosophy of life. The discussion of social, religious, economic, educational and political ideas is more for conceptual clarity, but only when considered as a whole in the context of the times would give an insight into the many-splendoured personality of Lala Lajpat Rai.

Dr. Nagar has made an objective and critical study of the life and work of Lala Lajpat Rai. His is not merely a laudatory effort but a perceptive appraisal. We tend to hero worship and are apt to forget that even our heroes, being human beings after all, may have some faults or foibles of their own. It is through the presentation of the total picture that the real greatness of a man shines forth. This seems to have been the sincere effort of the author. It is the greatness of Lala Lajpat Rai which is probably the reason for many of the misconceived or misinformed criticisms since our expectations of him were probably greater. We may as well remember what Hiren Mukerjee said with reference to Ram Mohan Roy: "If he does not fulfil all the expectations we may have from his grandeur, it was not so much his fault but the fault of his times and environment."

I have no doubt that this full length biography and study of his life, thought and times will go to fill a long-felt gap in the history of our political movement. It is a welcome addition to the biographical literature on prominent national figures in India. I do hope this work of scholarly merit will be widely welcome. Lala Lajpat Rai's saga of selfless service in the cause of the country and her people will continue to be a source of inspiration to us all. This volume enshrines the glowing life story of a man who according to a writer "combined in himself something of the religious fervour of Vivekanand, the political insight of Tilak, and the practical wisdom of Naoroji and Gokhale". Dr. Nagar deserves our congratulations and gratitude for presenting the portrait of such a national leader and his ideas for the present generation as well as for posterity.

Chandigarh,  
29th July, 1977.

T. N. CHATURVEDI

# Introduction

## I

Contemporary assessment of the great nation builders of modern India is warranted at the present juncture for more than one reason. First, we are now in possession of a much more extensive literature on the subject than was available in the past. The contributions of Indian as well as foreign scholars have been steadily growing in this respect. Second, there have been significant addition to the source material on individual personalities and leaders in such important agencies as the National Library, the National Archives, and the Nehru Memorial Library.

This is especially true of the life and work of Lajpat Rai. The birth centenary of Lala Lajpat Rai in 1965 was celebrated among other things, with the publication of his hitherto unpublished speeches and writings. Several academic institutions and public organisations paid homage to Lajpat Rai's services through lectures and publications. This new material facilitates the task of the review of Lajpat Rai's contribution to modern India.

## II

"The fight for independence", said Justice M. Hidayatullah while delivering Lajpat Rai Memorial Lectures in 1965, "was fought by many, but there were few like this Lion of Punjab".<sup>1</sup> Lajpat Rai was undoubtedly outstanding as a national leader and even more as a nation builder. He not only promoted the cause of Indian independence by his numerous services and sacrifices but also embodied the new spirit of Indian nationalism and with its help renovated the nationalist movement as a whole. His association with the extremists was symbolic of the new spirit that permeated the

nation. The rationale of his extremism in this connection is yet to be studied. The later phases of Lajpat Rai's career were no less noteworthy. His plunge into the Gandhian era and his work with the Swarajists were factors of national significance. His role as a social reformer was equally important.

It is in the context of these aspects of Lajpat Rai's personality and thought that sometimes diverse estimates are pronounced on his achievements. Mahatma Gandhi, a great contemporary of Lajpat Rai described him as a "multifarious personality".<sup>2</sup> Romain Rolland whom Lajpat Rai met twice in Europe considered him as "the master-mind, the great statesman".<sup>3</sup> In the estimation of Subhas Chandra Bose Lajpat Rai was one of the "outstanding intellectual stalwarts of the Congress".<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Nehru thought that Lajpat Rai's "inclination was also somewhat to the right as well as towards a more communal orientation".<sup>5</sup> There were many other strong critics of his. All such views on him, especially the critical ones, need to be closely scrutinised in the light of the available source material.

### III

While making such an enquiry, one is likely to come across some basic issues concerning Lajpat Rai's political career which remain unresolved. For instance, Lajpat Rai's role as an Extremist in Indian nationalist movement would reveal some interesting aspects of his politics. While he was an Extremist from 1905 to 1914 and championed the cause of radicals like Aurobindo Ghose and Tilak, he became subsequently a significant votary of the Gandhian technique of non-violent action. He also seemed to reconcile, at least partly, the militancy of the Extremist school with the judicial, constitutional approach of the Swarajists. Likewise, his radicalism in politics went hand in hand with gradualism in economic sphere. He ruled out revolution but pleaded for social transformation. To these issues could be added many more which we come across in Lajpat Rai's career and which need to be comprehensively dealt with in any new study of the man.

There are certain other controversies that centre around Lajpat Rai's career. It has often been maintained, for instance,

that Lajpat Rai's politics tended to strengthen communalism and Hindu revivalism. And the critics adduce evidence in the form of some actions and some utterances of Lajpat Rai, in support of their view. It is also alleged that Lajpat Rai while being a political radical, was really a social conservative. These questions of considerable importance have to be re-examined in the context of the newly available material from Lajpat Rai's writings with a view to establishing the veracity of his own position. Again his scheme of the partition of India and his association with the Hindu Mahasabha are often considered in isolation to support certain opinions. These aspects also have to be studied in detail either to prove or disprove some current notions about Lajpat Rai.

Thus, a study of Lajpat Rai's activities and ideas will be rewarding not only in itself but also in the larger interests of academic investigation.

#### IV

Every great man is admittedly an integral part of history whether he is a leader or a thinker. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan no study of an individual or an epoch can be complete without a sense of history.<sup>6</sup> If the historical context is not kept in view the statements of the leaders or thinkers belonging to that particular historical period may get very much distorted. This leads to unwarranted misrepresentation.

The first part of this work is devoted to a detailed historical analysis of the important events of Lajpat Rai's life. The second part is an attempt to delineate the thought of Lajpat Rai. His views on political, economic, social and religious problems are presented as inferred from the requisite historical study. This should provide us with the necessary framework to evaluate Lajpat Rai's contribution to modern Indian political and social thought.



## Notes

1. M. Hidayatullah, *Democracy in India and the Judicial Process*, (Asia, Bombay, 1966), p. 3.
2. Gandhi, *Young India*, November 22, 1928, cited in U.S. Mohan Rao (Ed.), *Pen-Portraits and Tributes by Gandhiji*, (National Book Trust, India, 1969), p. 146.
3. Romain Rolland, *Inde*, (Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 1960), p. 106, May 13, 1926.
4. Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, (Thacker, Spink and Co. Ltd., Calcutta, 1948), *Part II*, p. 91.
5. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, (Allied Publishers (P) Ltd., Bombay, 1962, Indian Edition), p. 158.
6. S. Radhakrishnan, *Gautama the Buddha* (Hind Kitabs, Bombay, 1946), p. 5.

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PURUSHOTTAM NAGAR

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## **Abbreviations**

<b>A.I.C.C.</b>	<b>All India Congress Committee.</b>
<b>A.I.T.U.C.</b>	<b>All India Trade Union Congress.</b>
<b>B.N.N.R.</b>	<b>Bengal Native Newspaper Reports.</b>
<b>C.P.</b>	<b>Central Provinces.</b>
<b>H.S.R.A.</b>	<b>Hindustan Socialist Republican Association</b>
<b>I.L.O.</b>	<b>International Labour Organization.</b>
<b>I.N.C.</b>	<b>Indian National Congress.</b>
<b>N.A.I.</b>	<b>National Archives of India.</b>
<b>N.C.O.</b>	<b>Non-Cooperation.</b>
<b>N.M.M.L.</b>	<b>Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.</b>
<b>Pol.</b>	<b>Political.</b>
<b>P.C.C.</b>	<b>Punjab Congress Committee.</b>
<b>P.N.N.R.</b>	<b>Punjab Native Newspaper Reports.</b>
<b>S.P.S.</b>	<b>Servants of the People Society.</b>

## CHAPTER I

### Early Phase (1865-1905)

Lala Lajpat Rai was born on 28th January 1865 at Dhudike<sup>1</sup> in Ferozpur district of the Punjab. He was the first child of his parents, Munshi Radha Kishan Azad and Gulab Devi.<sup>2</sup> His ancestors, Agarwal Bania by caste, belonged to Malerkotla but they later settled permanently in Jagraon, a village eight kilometres from Dhudike.

His grandfather, Rallumal, was a shopkeeper who also served as a patwari in a nearby village. He belonged to the Swetamber sect of Jains.<sup>3</sup> His grandmother was a devout and generous lady.<sup>4</sup> His father, Munshi Radha Kishan, received his early education in a Persian school. He was so much influenced by the religious devotion and lofty character of his Mohammedan Headmaster that like his schoolmates he too got fully Islamised in his outlook. And for a greater part of his life he remained a Muslim by conviction and a follower of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. He started his career as a school teacher in Persian.<sup>5</sup>

Lajpat Rai's mother hailed from a family which believed in Sikhism. Lala Feroz Chand, a close associate of Lala Lajpat Rai writes:

As I ruminate I am becoming aware of a deep Sikh influence of the noblest sort on young Lajpat Rai. I have definitely come to realise that *Guru Govind Singh's life had been a major source of inspiration of Lalaji—early youth onwards.* This seems to be a little known side of Lalaji's life . . . .<sup>6</sup>

But marriage tied Lajpat Rai's mother to "a man who was a lover of Islam and a friend of Mussalmans, and who renewed everyday his threat to turn Muslim".<sup>7</sup> It was his "mother's

miracle" that restrained his father from conversion.<sup>8</sup> For many years his father remained a vehement critic of Hinduism at home and did not allow his wife to perform orthodox Hindu customs so dear to her.<sup>9</sup>

In Lajpat Rai's early boyhood, his father read to him from the *Quran*. He recited *Namaz* and sometimes fasted in *Ramzan* under his father's influence.<sup>10</sup>

In 1879, he joined the Mission High School in Ludhiana. His study of Maulvi Muhammad Hussain's *Qasis-i-Hind* made him an admirer of Hindu Rajput valour. Another book on Indian history, *Waquiat-i-Hind*, taught at school, had a profound impact on him. He recollected: "That book created in me the feeling that Mussalmans had subjected the Hindus to great tyranny. Gradually the respect for Islam that I had acquired from early training began to change into hatred . . . ."<sup>11</sup>

From Ludhiana he went to Lahore for further studies in November 1880. He passed the Entrance Examination from Government College, Lahore, and in 1882 qualified for Mukhtarship (Junior Pleader).

### Lajpat Rai and the Arya Samaj

Lahore in those days was passing through a period of social and religious regeneration. The Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj were the popular movements attracting the intelligentsia. Lajpat Rai came in close contact with Pandit Shiv Narayan Agnihotri, a leader of the Punjab Brahmo Samaj (later he founded the Dev Samaj) and on his persuasion, became a member of the Brahmo Samaj.<sup>12</sup>

Lajpat Rai's college friends at Lahore, Pt. Guru Dutt, Lala Hansraj and Rai Shiv Nath exerted deep influence on him. They played an important role in shaping his life. He wrote:

. . . The company I had in Lahore made my mind turn away from Islam and what is more important, I became attached to Hindusim and Hindus. This attachment was not so much theological or religious, it was nationalistic . . . .<sup>13</sup>

In 1882, the Punjab was a centre of Urdu-Hindi controversy. Lajpat Rai, Pt. Guru Dutt and Lala Hansraj strongly advocated the cause of Hindi and opposed Urdu. They consi-

dered Hindi to be the language most suited to the cause of national solidarity. Pt. Guru Dutt and he got a memorandum signed by thousands of students in favour of Hindi. This language controversy imparted to him his "first lesson in Hindu Nationalism",<sup>14</sup> and was his first initiation in a public cause. He could easily have cashed on his proficiency in Urdu, Persian and Arabic for personal gain but he chose to advocate the cause of Hindi. Interestingly enough he did not know the Hindi alphabet when he opposed the use of Urdu for the first time in a public speech at Ambala. His support to the language was motivated by national considerations.<sup>15</sup> He wrote:

. . . Early training and parental teaching should have enlisted my support on the side of Urdu . . . . But as I became convinced that political solidarity demanded the spread of Hindi and Devanagari, I brushed aside all personal considerations and started propaganda for Hindi . . . .<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, in 1881-82, Lajpat Rai read the speeches of Sir Surendranath Banerjea. The latter's speech on the Italian patriot Mazzini impressed him so much that he accepted Mazzini as his *Guru* and decided to serve the nation.<sup>17</sup>

Lajpat Rai's outlook became more and more nationalistic in the company of his friends. He wrote:

The soul nurtured on Islam in infancy, and beginning adolescence by seeking shelter in the Brahmo Samaj, began to develop a love for the ancient Hindu culture in the company of Guru Dutt and Hansraj. Guru Dutt was a great admirer of John Stuart Mill and Bentham. His company brought me into touch with the writings of these thinkers, and this contact widened my horizons.<sup>18</sup>

He often used to hear about the Arya Samaj and its activities from Guru Dutt and Hansraj. The latter often criticised the Brahmos for their adherence to the Bible. Lajpat Rai became a member of the Free Debating Club founded by Pandit Guru Dutt.<sup>19</sup>

Lajpat Rai's love for ancient Aryan culture drew him away from the Brahmo Samaj. His friends invited him to the Arya Samaj, but he hesitated joining it because of his father's hosti-



lity towards it. At last under the influence of Lala Sain Das he became an Arya Samajist in December 1882. This was a turning point of his life. The Arya Samaj played a momentous role in his political career.

In January 1883, two papers were started by Pandit Guru Dutt, Lala Hansraj and Lala Lajpat Rai.

“One of these”, Lajpat Rai recollected, “was called the *Regenerator of Aryavarta* and the other *Desh Upkarak*. Both the names had been suggested by me. The idea was that the English journal would be edited by Guru Dutt and Hansraj, and the Urdu one by me. Guru Dutt and Hansraj conducted the English journal for nearly two years, but I could not do anything for the Urdu paper, as immediately afterwards I had to set up as a Mukhtar to earn a living.”<sup>20</sup>

Lajpat Rai got his grounding in public life in the Arya Samaj. He went so far as to say that whatever good he had in him was all because of the Arya Samaj and all that was evil in him, he owed either to his parents or his past birth.<sup>21</sup> The impact of the Samaj on him is best described in his own words:

It was the Arya Samaj that taught me to love the Vedic religion and to be proud of Aryan greatness. It was the Arya Samaj that linked me with the ancient Aryas and made me their admirer and devotee. It was the Arya Samaj that instilled into me the spirit of truth, of Dharma and of liberty. My organising capacity too I owe to the Arya Samaj. It was the Samaj again that taught me that Society, Dharma and country command our worship and that those shall inherit the kingdom of Heaven who make sacrifices to serve these.<sup>22</sup>

“This influence”, says Barrier, “was particularly evident in the intellectual development of Lajpat Rai. Lajpat Rai was not a systematic political philosopher, but the few key ideas continually appearing in his speeches and writings can be traced almost invariably to association with the Arya Samaj. Lajpat Rai accepted Dayanand’s presentation of the Vedic period as the golden age of Indian culture lost through the trickery of Brahmins and Western contamination.”<sup>23</sup>

The death of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj on October 30, 1883 shook Lajpat Rai to the core. The Lahore Arya Samaj organised a condolence meeting at which he was the main speaker. About Swami Dayanand Lajpat Rai said:

His was a power which has permeated Hindu life and has created herein tendencies which have sprung up and will spring up, into multitudinous institutions and movements that, in their turn, will continue to multiply and influence the destiny of the nation for centuries onwards.<sup>21</sup>

His speech won him regard as the front rank speaker of the Samaj.<sup>25</sup> According to Lala Hansraj's report, Lajpat Rai had "touched the heart chords of us all".<sup>26</sup>

From Lahore, Lajpat Rai went to Jagraon in 1883 to practise as a Mukhtar. A year later he shifted to Rohtak where, side by side, he worked as a Secretary of the local Arya Samaj. He also raised funds for the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College, Lahore.<sup>27</sup> At last he became a Vakil and started his legal practice at Hissar in 1886, where he continued till 1892. His monthly income went on increasing rapidly. He collected and himself contributed a handsome amount for the D.A.V. College, Lahore. He read extensively to fill the gaps in his education. He also earnestly attended to the Samaj work and in leisure time wrote for the press and continued to take interest in political affairs.

At Hissar, a Muslim friend of his gave him academic company. Lajpat Rai wrote:

In the interesting work of study, a Mussalman, Mir Mohammad Hussain, an English clerk of the district was my companion. As long as I was in Hissar our relations were very intimate. I dined at his house several times, and he dined at mine more frequently and borrowed books from me.<sup>28</sup>

Lajpat Rai also acted as an Honorary Secretary of the Hissar Municipal Committee. The Municipal Ward which he represented was inhabited mainly by Mussalmans. "When they went to the Deputy Commissioner", Lajpat Rai wrote, "to propose my name, he tried to dissuade them. But they persisted and I

was returned to the Committee unopposed.”<sup>29</sup> As a city father he took keen interest in promoting the cause of health and education. He did “a pioneer’s work” in arousing political consciousness among the people at Hissar.<sup>30</sup>

His work as a member of the Municipal Committee was appreciated by the District and the Judicial officers. Once the Deputy Commissioner tried to win him over with a promise of recommending his name for Extra Assistant Commissionership. But Lajpat Rai declined to accept it as he had no ambition to shine as a Government officer. At about this time, Pandit Guru Dutt, writing to Lajpat Rai, remarked, “What are you doing at Hissar or Rohtak ? . . . fame is a wonderful impetus. But my dear Sir, do not pant after fame. Do solid good to your country without shaming yourself more than you deserve. Work silently and then the fame of posterity shall be your reward.”<sup>31</sup> The worldly success he had achieved at Hissar appeared futile to him. His real ambition was something higher. He wrote:

To amass wealth was not the object of my life. To enjoy luxury was not my goal. To win official honours was not my ambition. My spirit yearned for things quite different from these. I wanted to sacrifice myself for my people and for my country as the moth burns itself on the candle flame, and Hissar was not the proper place for fulfilling this ambition.<sup>32</sup>

### **Lajpat Rai and the Indian National Congress**

Lajpat Rai’s interest in the Indian National Congress dates back to December 1887 when its third session was held in Madras under the Presidentship of Badrudin Tyabji. He read A.O. Hume’s pamphlets “Star of the East” and “An Old Man’s Hope” and was greatly impressed by them. By this time, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who had once described India as a bride whose two eyes represented the Hindu and Muslim Communities, had changed his stand. He (Sir Syed) now criticised the Indian National Congress as aiming to advance the exclusive interests of the Hindus and advised his co-religionists not to join the Congress.

Lajpat Rai wrote four "Open letters to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan" in October-December, 1888, criticising and exposing his *volte face*, signing himself as "The son of an old follower of yours".<sup>33</sup> He challenged Sir Syed to explain his somersault regarding his previous utterances about Hindu-Muslim unity and the Indianisation of the Legislative Councils. These "Open Letters" brought him tremendous fame within a short time.<sup>34</sup> They were subsequently reprinted and circulated by A. O. Hume at his own cost.<sup>35</sup>

The first time he attended the session of the Indian National Congress was at Allahabad in December 1888. This session of the Congress presided over by George Yule marked the beginning of his political life. His "Open letters" had already made him "loved and honoured" in the Congress circles. He seconded the main resolution relating to the expansion of the Councils and delivered a short speech—his first from the Congress platform—in which he criticised Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.<sup>36</sup> During the proceedings he struck a note of loyalty:

... It is with a feeling of exultation and pride that I address this splendid assembly—splendid on account of its loyalty to the crown, splendid on account of its sincere attachment to our great Queen-Empress . . . .<sup>37</sup>

He attended the next Congress session at Bombay in 1889 presided over by William Wedderburn. Here Lajpat Rai made a speech in support of Tilak's amendment to the resolution on membership of the Imperial and Provincial Legislative Councils. Bipin Chandra Pal and Gokhale too supported Tilak. Incidentally, "this was the first and last occasion when Tilak and Gokhale concurred with each other in the Congress proceedings. The amendment was, however, lost."<sup>38</sup>

At this session Lajpat Rai pleaded that no distinction should be made among the members of the different communities in regard to political privileges. As for himself, he declared, "I am a Hindu, in the Punjab the Hindus are in a minority and so far as I am concerned I should be quite content to be represented by any good Mohammedan or Sikh member."<sup>39</sup> These words he spoke while opposing the claim of a Muslim delegate for equal representation of his community

for elected seats in the Council. He, however, favoured the resolution providing for representation of minorities by men of their own communities to remove their fears and guard their interests.<sup>40</sup> Pherozechah Mehta tried to interrupt Lajpat Rai's speech by raising a point of order. He wanted Lajpat Rai to speak on the proposition before the Congress. Mehta being a moderate did not favour the 'radicalism' in Lajpat Rai's arguments.<sup>41</sup>

It was at this session that Lajpat Rai developed an aversion towards the Congress. He disliked hypocrisy among its leaders. He felt that they cared more for their dignity and name than for the emancipation of the country. So he kept away from the Congress and did not attend any further sessions of it till 1892. Actually, the seeds of this apathy were sown by his Arya Samajist friends who opposed the Congress on various grounds. They looked at the very creation of the Indian National Congress by Englishmen with distrust and considered both Englishmen and their brain-child, the Congress, as being detrimental to national interests. The Congress, they thought, was created as a safety valve,<sup>42</sup> and a device to check the intelligentsia from taking part in any stronger political movement for Indian freedom. Similarly, they (the Arya Samajist friends) were not in favour of the Congress's call for Hindu-Muslim unity. This unity, they felt, had no utility as it militated against the Hindu solidarity. In their view, in the face of Islamic supremacy in the neighbouring countries like Afghanistan, Turkey, etc., the Muslims in India were bound to get pre-eminence in politics. Further, the unity effort would jeopardise the interests of the Hindus who lacked internal cohesion as against the Muslims who excelled in internal solidarity, religious fervour and communal self-respect. The prime need according to them, was to strengthen the Hindus. Moreover, they believed that participation of the Hindus in political activities would arouse the suspicions of the Government about them. As such the best course open to the Arya Samajists was to keep away from all politics.<sup>43</sup>

Lajpat Rai largely supported these views, though his support to the suspension of political activities was circumstantial and not spontaneous.<sup>44</sup> The Government was keeping

an eye on the Arya Samaj activities. The leaders of the Samaj did not wish to invite untimely obstruction by the rulers. Moreover, the Samaj had on its rolls a good number of Government employees who were not inclined to meddle with politics. The need of the hour was to inculcate the feelings of self-help, self-reliance and self-confidence among the Hindus. It took Lajpat Rai long to revive the interest of the Arya Samajists in the Congress.

In 1892, he settled in Lahore as a Chief Court Vakil. A schism appeared in the Lahore Arya Samaj on the question of leadership of the Samaj. One faction headed by Lala Munshi Ram (Swami Shraddhanand) was labelled as the "Mahatma" party and the other headed by Lala Hansraj as the "Cultured" party. And they differed on issues like vegetarianism vs. non-vegetarianism, Sanskrit vs. English, and the authority of Dayanand. As Secretary of the Lahore Arya Samaj, Lajpat Rai had to deal with both the factions and so he maintained his neutrality for sometime though he was personally inclined towards the "cultured" or the college section headed by Lala Hansraj. He was not opposed to non-vegetarian diet and the use of Western education and language. Not having a narrow or rigid outlook, he did not subscribe to the infallibility of Swami Dayanand either. But he wanted to avoid any disunity for the sake of D.A.V. College. He did not want to ruin this institution by adopting Sanskrit as a medium of instruction. The institution could be popular only by getting itself affiliated to the Punjab University. And there was no hope of obtaining funds if the prescribed curriculum was changed.<sup>45</sup> Analysing the schism in the Arya Samaj Kenneth W. Jones writes:

The division of the Arya Samaj into moderate and militant wings represented two opposing interpretations of Dayanand's concepts. The former, deeply involved in the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College movement, less devotional and more "secular", remained closer to the Hindus as a community and a people. Leading moderates, in their stress on education and orphan and famine relief, served all Hindus regardless of sectarian commitments. They also

led the way toward political action, first in the Indian National Congress and then the Punjab Hindu Sabha. Typical of such leaders, Lala Lal Chand and Lala Lajpat Rai stood foremost among politicized Aryas. . . .<sup>46</sup>

Here, it is interesting to note that as a result of the split Lala Hansraj resigned on August 15, 1893, from the Presidency of the Arya Samaj at Lahore. Then "Lajpat Rai's name was proposed but he got defeated at the hands of Lala Durga Prashad, Headmaster of the Dayanand Middle School, Lahore."<sup>47</sup>

By September, 1893, the split in the Arya Samaj led to the establishment of the New Samaj at Anarkali in Lahore by the "cultured" or the College party. Lajpat Rai was saddled with the responsibility for the new Samaj. He was President of the Anarkali Samaj, general secretary of the College Committee, and editor of the *Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College Samachar*. He regularly contributed articles to the *Bharat-Sudhar* (Urdu) and the *Aryan Messenger* (English). Besides, he had to go on tours to raise funds for the D.A.V. College. This routine of work lasted till 1897.<sup>48</sup> From 1897 to 1899, Lala Hansraj and Lala Lajpat Rai jointly edited the *Arya Gazette*.<sup>49</sup> For many years he took an active part in the propagation work of the Arya Samaj and collected funds<sup>50</sup> for the Samaj and College.

In 1893 the Congress session was convened at Lahore. The Arya Samaj then being engaged in its internal strife, most of its leaders did not participate in the Congress work. However, Bakshi Jaishi Ram, a leading Arya Samajist, and Rai Mul Raj, once a staunch opponent of the Congress in the Arya Samaj camp, played a prominent part in the session. Lajpat Rai was one of the members of the Reception Committee, but apart from making a few speeches,<sup>51</sup> remained passive.

Four years later Lajpat Rai's house became the venue of the reunion of the Arya Samaj, when it met under the gloom of the assassination of Pandit Lekh Ram. Pandit Lekh Ram, an Arya Samaj preacher had been stabbed by a Muslim. His utterances from the Arya Samaj platform were rather aggressive and he attacked Islam and Christianity without reservations.<sup>52</sup> Though Lajpat Rai criticised his partiality of Hinduism as stifling "the spirit of free and impartial investigation in the

Samaj” he praised his role in the Shuddhi work for which he had sacrificed his life. Lajpat Rai wrote:

Pandit Lekh Ram was fearless in preaching his ideas. He had several times received threats from Mussalmans and it was evident that the bigoted Maulvies were athirst for his blood. The way he was assassinated will ever remain a blot on Islam.<sup>53</sup>

The Arya Samaj set up a committee with Lajpat Rai as its head to trace the assassin. He along with the police tried to bring the culprit to book with no results. Lajpat Rai was convinced that the sympathies of the Lahore Muslims for the culprit had foiled all efforts for his arrest. He observed:

. . . the assassination was the result of a big conspiracy in which some of the Maulvies and Muslim *raises* of Lahore had a part and they gave shelter to the assassin and helped him make good his escape. The escape was in any case a good example of the Islamic brotherhood and unity on which the Muslims may well pride themselves.<sup>54</sup>

The reunion, however, proved short-lived.

In 1897-98 Lajpat Rai rendered memorable services to the famine-stricken people in the Central Provinces. The Christian Missionaries were quick to exploit the situation. Lajpat Rai launched a movement for the protection of the orphans of the province under the auspices of the Anarkali Arya Samaj. He received the support of all Hindus including the Sanatanists and the Brahmos. Several orphans were brought from the province and were accommodated in the various Hindu orphanages newly established in the Punjab. The Lahore Hindu Orphanage was a creation of this move.<sup>55</sup> Lajpat Rai firmly observed: “A nation which could not protect its own orphans and waifs could not claim to command respect at the hands of other people.”<sup>56</sup> The Arya Samaj was the first non-Christian private agency which had started a non-official movement for relief of the distress caused by the famine, and Lajpat Rai was the first organiser of such relief. In the beginning, the work was confined to the Hindu orphans. About 250 of them were rescued and sent to orphanages established in the Punjab.<sup>57</sup>



There was again a famine in the country in 1899-1900, which was even more dreadful and the Punjab, Central Provinces, Rajputana and the United Provinces were all in its grip. This time the relief work was planned and implemented by Lajpat Rai on an extensive scale. At least 2000 orphans were rescued from the Christian missions.<sup>59</sup> He writes: "... In Rajputana alone Hinduism lost seventy thousand of these unfortunate children who were collected by Christian Missions of various denominations and despatched to distant places in various parts of India."<sup>59</sup> At another place he says: "... Hindus would feed any in famine but Muslims and Christians would not, except at the price of his religion."<sup>60</sup> This humanitarian work of Lajpat Rai's evoked criticism<sup>61</sup> as well as applause.<sup>62</sup>

The Indian Famine Commission (1901) recorded Lajpat Rai's evidence<sup>63</sup> and agreed with him in recommending that deserted children and orphans "should not be made over to persons or institutions of different religions until all efforts to find persons and institutions of their own religion willing to take charge of them have failed".<sup>64</sup>

Meanwhile, a number of other activities engaged Lajpat Rai's attention. His biographies of Mazzini, Garibaldi and Shivaji were published in 1896 and those of Dayanand and Shri Krishna in 1898.<sup>65</sup> He decided to donate the whole of his income at the Bar to humanitarian work, especially that of the Samaj. His biography of Mazzini, in Urdu, aroused suspicion in Government circles. But no legal prosecution was launched as the officials themselves were divided in their opinion of the work.<sup>66</sup>

He also took keen interest in the establishment of the Punjab National Bank. The second national effort of its type in India,<sup>67</sup> the Bank was established in 1895. It owed much to the efforts of Lala Harkishan Lal and Lala Mul Raj. Lajpat Rai who welcomed this economic move, wrote in the introduction of his work on Mazzini that "political liberation would have to be preceded by liberation in religion, in education and in economic life."<sup>68</sup> He was elected as a Director of the Punjab National Bank in 1898.<sup>69</sup>

### Congress in the Punjab

The Arya Samaj played a significant role in contemporary politics in the Punjab. The provincial politics in turn affected the national politics in many ways. The spread of Hindu militancy and the expansion of the Congress activities were both intertwined. This resulted in faction fights, estrangements and conflicts among the provincial stalwarts.

Up to 1899 the Congress could not make much headway in the Punjab. The support to the Congress was limited to the Lahore Indian Association controlled by a handful of Bengalis and Punjabi Brahmo Samajists. "Except for 1888 and 1893, when Congress membership tended to become a communal issue in the Punjab, the liberal leaders of the Indian Association such as J.C. Bose, Ruchi Ram Sahni and Dayal Singh were unable to arouse widespread interest in the national secular programme of the Congress."<sup>70</sup> The Aryas, who dominated the new professional class were indifferent, even hostile to the Congress. They were mostly too preoccupied with "cow protection, internal politics and defence of Hindu interests to participate in a national political organization."<sup>71</sup> Besides, fear of the Government and distrust of the "pro-western" views of the Congress kept them away.

The Congress session of 1900 held at Lahore again revived Lajpat Rai's interest in the national politics. But "the educated Hindus who joined together in the Congress brought with them animosities and factional strife generated in economic and religious competition. Rival factions, Arya and Brahmo, struggled for control of the Congress. Competition between the Lal Chand - Lajpat Rai faction and the Harkishan Lal-Brahmo group extended from the Board rooms of the Punjab National Bank to Congress Committees. In the wake of 1900 meetings, the Aryas contested Lala Harkishan Lal's position of leadership and a bitter controversy developed over the handling of Congress funds."<sup>72</sup>

At the Lahore session Lajpat Rai moved a resolution to impress on the Congress that at least half a day be devoted in each session for the consideration of educational and industrial subjects and a committee be appointed for this purpose.<sup>73</sup> As a result two committees were set up, one industrial and the

other educational. The industrial committee included Lajpat Rai, Pherozeshah Mehta, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dinshaw Wacha. In the educational committee the members were Lajpat Rai, Tilak, Gokhale and Surendranath Banerjea.<sup>74</sup> This resolution of Lajpat Rai was important as it prepared the way for the advance of the Swadeshi cause in the Congress.<sup>75</sup> It also showed how the Congress session could be converted from a "three day tamasha" into a body seriously devoted to the problems of the people and to finding out ways and means to solve them.<sup>76</sup>

The Lahore session (1900) was important for another reason also. It provided Lajpat Rai with opportunities to befriend Tilak and exchange views with him.<sup>77</sup> This friendship was the beginning of "Lal-Bal-Pal" combine in the Indian Nationalist struggle and it gave rise to the Extremist wing in the Congress.

In 1901 Lajpat Rai became a member of the Indian Congress Committee, which met at Allahabad and elected Dinshaw Wacha as the President of the Calcutta session that was to be held the same year.

By this time Lajpat Rai had published two suggestive articles to draw the attention of the participants in the Calcutta session to the tasks ahead. In his first article "The Economic and Industrial Campaign in India", he advocated the cause of technological education for Indians. He held the Government as well as the Congress responsible for the economic backwardness of the country. The British Government wanted to retain India as an easy market for British goods. It was because of the vested interests that she was not prepared to promote technical education. As for the Congress, it was engaged in fruitless agitation caring little to promote economic growth through India's own industries.<sup>78</sup>

In the second article, "The Coming Indian National Congress—Some Suggestions", he criticised the pomp, vanity and vainglory witnessed at the Congress sessions. He pointed to the futility of constitutional agitation and said that political freedom could not be achieved without making sacrifices. He was also critical of the Congress policy regarding Hindu-Muslim unity and suggested that the Congress should secure its hold on Hindus. "Lajpat Rai's use of 'Hindu' rather than

'Arya' brought sharp criticism from militant Samajists but fitted with the growing politicization among some moderate Aryas whose primary loyalty shifted from sect to community. This paralleled an expanding consciousness of Hindu symbols and Hindu heroes both within and beyond Punjab."<sup>79</sup> Lajpat Rai felt that attempts to unify various religious communities under the banner of the Congress would weaken the position of the Hindus. A national social conference could work for reforms in the Hindu society, but there was no need for appeasing Muslims and Christians at the cost of the Hindu interest.<sup>80</sup>

These articles had naturally little effect on the veteran leaders, especially the old guard of the Congress. Even the resolution of Lajpat Rai accepted in the last Congress was set aside as "crude and ill-digested".<sup>81</sup> And no fresh elections were made to the Indian Congress Committee. The Punjabi delegates protested against this high-handedness of the old guard, but they were tactfully calmed down.<sup>82</sup>

The Calcutta Congress strengthened Lajpat Rai's conviction about the ineffectiveness of constitutional agitation. Lord Curzon had already announced his intention "to assist it (Congress) to a peaceful demise". So instead of looking up to the Government for political rights the people who were the final arbiters of political progress had to learn to be self-reliant. He wrote :

...The first axiom which every Indian politician ought to take to heart is that no nation is worthy of any political status if it cannot distinguish between begging rights and claiming them.<sup>83</sup>

Instead of mendicancy Lajpat Rai preached militancy in the Congress programme. The veterans of the Congress termed Lajpat Rai and his associates as 'pessimists'. To them "the journey towards the destined goal must necessarily be slow . . . and can only be attained after prolonged preparation and laborious apprenticeship."<sup>84</sup>

For two years he kept himself aloof from the Congress and engrossed himself in the Arya Samaj activities. He founded with others the Arya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha in 1903.<sup>85</sup>

Lord Curzon's arbitrary measures in the spheres of local self-Government, university education and freedom of the press led to a change in the political climate. The moderates in the Congress felt the need for agitation in England and for removing internal party dissensions. Lal Mohan Ghosh, representing the new extremist spirit as the President of the nineteenth session in Madras (1903) warned the leaders of the Congress to refrain from their autocratic rule within the Congress.<sup>86</sup> He was hinting at the overbearing methods of moderates like Pherozeshah Mehta and his associates, which had induced a mood of apathy among leaders like Lajpat Rai.

This being the situation in the Congress, Lajpat Rai felt the need for renewing his contacts with the nationalist movement through the Arya Samaj. The political life in the Punjab had been dull after the Lahore session of the Congress in 1900.<sup>87</sup> The news of Japan's victories over Russia renewed interest in the future of India and its nationalist movement. The Arya Samaj once again brought forth leaders to encourage native industry and self-help. Aryas "held sympathy meetings for Japan, introduced the Japanese language into their college curriculum, sent a few students to Tokyo, and helped organize new industries."<sup>88</sup> In order to revive the political activity in the province, the Arya Samajists under the leadership of Lajpat Rai, started an English bi-weekly, the *Panjabee* from Lahore in October, 1904.<sup>89</sup> Its editor K.K. Athavale was selected by Lajpat Rai on the recommendation of Tilak.<sup>90</sup> The paper very soon became well-known for its independence. It also served as a mouthpiece for Lajpat Rai's views. The Samaj also decided to send a delegation from the Punjab to the forthcoming Congress session at Bombay in 1904.<sup>91</sup>

This Bombay session was presided over by Sir Henry Cotton. The grievances of the Punjab delegates were discussed in the Subjects Committee. Lajpat Rai attended this Congress and it was here that he met Sir William Wedderburn. This meeting drew Lajpat Rai closer to the Congress.<sup>92</sup>

Sir Henry Cotton in his presidential speech emphasised the need for discipline among the Congress rank and file and for seeking the support of the liberals on the occasion of the impending General Election in England.<sup>93</sup> The Congress adopted

a resolution, moved by William Wedderburn and seconded by B.G. Tilak, "that as a General Election was approaching in England a deputation should be sent from India to bring the claims of India before the electors and the candidates".<sup>94</sup> The proposed delegates to England were Pherozeshah Mehta, Sankaran Nair, Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Surendranath Banerjea. But Pherozeshah Mehta, the officiating Chairman of the Reception Committee and a dozen of Bombay Congressites were in favour of selecting only Gokhale and Jinnah as delegates. However, as luck would have it, Jinnah somehow could not go and, therefore, Gokhale and Lajpat Rai made the trip instead.<sup>95</sup> Lajpat Rai's name had been suggested by Gokhale.<sup>96</sup>

Another important task before the session was to provide the Congress with a new constitution. This was the only measure through which the radicals could be reconciled and the dissenters won over. The Bombay moderate group of Pherozeshah Mehta was not in favour of this move. Lajpat Rai resented the overbearing attitude of Pherozeshah Mehta and there were heated exchanges between them.<sup>97</sup> Ultimately a committee was appointed to draft the new constitution. Punjab was represented on this committee by Lala Lajpat Rai and Harkishan Lal.<sup>98</sup>

The Indian Association, Lahore, collected funds for his trip to England. Lajpat Rai's attempt to solidify his political position by securing the Indian Association nomination as the Punjab member of the deputation evoked sharp opposition from a few non-Arya politicians led by Harkishan Lal who actually returned from political retirement and made an issue of the nomination. But his belated attempt to prevent Lajpat Rai and in effect the Arya Samaj from controlling the Punjab Congress was futile.<sup>99</sup> Lajpat Rai left Lahore for England on May 10, 1905. From the very first, he was not over-optimistic about the results of his mission.<sup>100</sup> He had no faith in the benevolent intentions of the British electors. In his farewell address at Lahore on 8th May 1905, he said, "But to think that he is prepared to lessen his imperial grip upon you or sacrifice his rights, privileges and interests for your sake . . . is counting too far, and living in a world of delusion."<sup>101</sup> For he believed that the British rulers would accept only those poli-

tical demands which suited their imperial and national interests. It was useless to appeal the British elector in political matter "in the name of political philanthropy or ethical justice". Similarly, he did not have faith in the work of the British Congress Committee.

### Lajpat Rai in England

Lajpat Rai reached London in June 1905. His political views left the members of the British Congress Committee in a mood of indifference. And none from the Committee came to welcome him. Lajpat Rai made arrangements for his stay in a hotel, but later, on the persuasion of Shyamji Krishna Varma, he shifted to India House. Shyamji Krishna Varma was the noted Indian revolutionary who edited a monthly named *Indian Sociologist*. At that time he was propagating Home Rule for India and had made a scathing criticism of the British Committee of the Congress. Lajpat Rai liked his political ideas, though not his attitude towards the Congress and his bitterness against Gokhale.<sup>102</sup> Lajpat Rai was introduced by Shyamji to Henry Mayers Hyndman, the radical socialist leader in England. His contacts with Hyndman, the founder of the first socialist party of Britain—the Social Democratic Federation, and other socialists of Britain provide the clue to his later socialist ideas.<sup>103</sup>

Dadabhai Naoroji, as Vice-President of the National Democratic League, invited Lajpat Rai to attend the League's meeting at London's Holborn Hall. Lajpat Rai went and made his first speech in London. Shyamji Krishna Varma also addressed the meeting and moved a resolution on Home Rule for India, which Lajpat Rai supported.<sup>104</sup>

Lajpat Rai's speech annoyed Sir Henry Cotton. The latter did not see eye to eye with Shyamji Krishna Varma and, therefore, did not like his speaking from the same platform. Sir Henry Cotton held that Lajpat Rai as a Congress delegate could not be friendly with the opponents of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. He in fact moved the Committee to censure him and disown him as a Congress delegate. But Lajpat Rai stood his ground, maintaining that there was nothing in his speech which wished ill for the British Committee. He was not ready to sacrifice his freedom of expression

as a Congress delegate. Sir William Wedderburn stood by Lajpat Rai and the motion had to be withdrawn.<sup>106</sup>

During his stay in England, Lajpat Rai was convinced that the Liberals were not interested in advancing the cause of Indian freedom. His faith was that the Labour Party and the Irish leaders could alone be helpful in supporting the stand of the Indian nationalists.<sup>107</sup>

Even so, Lajpat Rai went about in right earnest, pleading India's case before the British people, specially the working class. In a meeting held at Lancashire in July 27, 1905, speaking on the relations of Lancashire with India, Lajpat Rai pointed out<sup>108</sup> that India played an important part in the fortunes of England but received scant attention from its politicians and statesmen, adding that "even the Parliament is so neglectful of Indian affairs that hardly any importance is attached to the discussion of the same . . . ."<sup>109</sup> He brought home to his listeners the fact that without removing illiteracy, poverty and high-handedness of the bureaucratic rule the British Government was of no avail to India. The growing poverty of Indians would mean decrease in their purchasing power. Similarly, the growing political disaffection would imperil the British trade with India. "Indians have, therefore", said Lajpat Rai, "no reason to be thankful to the British for having civilised them . . . in exchange for all the other good things of the world of which they have been deprived by the unnatural rule of the foreigner and his extremely unsound financial and economic policy."<sup>110</sup>

He further said that foreign rule, however, well-intentioned could never be a blessing, particularly when conducted on despotic lines. Things could change in India only when the gap between the ruler and the ruled was narrowed down. Indians should have a share in the administration of their own country.<sup>111</sup> Emphasising the trade links between Lancashire and India he stated that a prosperous, wealthier, happier, educated and skilled India could be of much greater benefit to Lancashire. For this he requested the voters to elect only those who were interested in Indian affairs and supported the reform measures for India.<sup>112</sup>

During August 1905, Lajpat Rai addressed a meeting of the Liberal Party at Kettering and a meeting of the Labour Party



in Lincolnshire. He told his Labour audience that Indians had lost faith in the Liberals and henceforth looked hopefully to the support of working class of England.<sup>113</sup> To his Liberal audience he said that the racial arrogance of Englishmen in India could no longer be tolerated and that as long as Englishmen constituted a separate ruling class in India, Indians could not but regard them as aliens and their rule as tyrannical and unacceptable.<sup>114</sup>

In September 1905, Lajpat Rai left for America where he addressed meetings in New York, Philadelphia and Boston. He told his American audiences that since India was exploited by Britain, Indians desired self-Government.<sup>115</sup> At Boston, Lajpat Rai, in his speech, blamed the British Government for famines and diseases in India and accused the fiscal policy of the Government of ruining the Indian manufacturers. "You are probably aware," he said, "that 10\$ a year is the average earning of one of our natives, and out of that 2\$ as taxes to the Government. The present fiscal policy has ruined all Indian manufacturers and there is no way out of the difficulty unless the Government adopts some favourable attitude. This is bound to bring on great suffering. . . . The great burden on India is the tremendous military expenditure which has been increased by Lord Kitchner to £ 23,000,000 this year, giving India practically a military Government."<sup>116</sup>

His speech was termed as 'highly objectionable' by the Director of Criminal Intelligence, India.<sup>117</sup> Lajpat Rai stayed in the United States for less than a month but the significance of this short stay was described in terms of "pioneering India's political contact with Americans".<sup>118</sup>

In October, Lajpat Rai returned to London to join Gokhale. Sir William Wedderburn planned their tour programme which included visits to London, Manchester, Leeds, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Both Lajpat Rai and Gokhale started on their mission, sometimes speaking separately and sometimes to the same audience. These meetings were mostly arranged by the Labour Party.<sup>119</sup> T. R. Deogirikar writes: "The two had abilities that complemented each other's. As a powerful orator, Lajpat Rai addressed mass meetings, while Gokhale addressed meetings of Parliamentarians, Liberals and selected

sections of the people.”<sup>120</sup> Lajpat Rai, in his speeches throughout stressed the poverty of the Indian masses and emphasised India’s desire for self-government.<sup>121</sup>

His stay abroad deepened his yearning to enjoy political liberty at home. Political rights and privileges were jealously guarded by the people in the West against all encroachments and suppressions. Democratic spirit reigned supreme. He compared this with the political conditions prevailing in India and realised that political agitation there lacked courage, forbearance, earnestness and the spirit of sacrifice. He felt there was an urgent need for full time political workers in India, who could initiate a new struggle for freedom and he thought Tilak and Gokhale to be most fitted to undertake the work of organising such a political movement in India. He believed that the partition of Bengal in 1905<sup>122</sup> had shown the way for future agitations, that there was need to adopt vigorous measures, and also that the methods of agitation required substantial change.<sup>123</sup>

Regarding the Congress some new thoughts came to his mind during his sojourn in England. He suggested that the forthcoming Congress session at Benaras could do real work by having a larger gathering, a smaller deliberative conference and a still smaller standing committee for guiding the work round the year. This committee could meet twice or thrice a year and if Sir Pherozeshah Mehta could not spare time to attend its sittings at some central place, then Bombay could be the permanent venue. If Bengal delegates objected to it, both Bombay and Calcutta could be the venues of the meetings every alternate year.<sup>124</sup> For bringing Government to its senses on the issue of the partition of Bengal he strongly supported Bengal’s decision to boycott British goods.<sup>125</sup>

### Return

Lajpat Rai returned to Lahore on November 22, 1905. He came back more than ever convinced of the futility of constitutional agitation. He spoke of the need of self-help and self-reliance for political progress. In his speech at Lahore he said:

The English voter whether Liberal or Conservative, is a sympathetic creature no doubt, but then he is absorbed in his own troubles and affairs and has neither the time nor the inclination to attend to anything which does not directly concern him or which is likely to affect his pocket injuriously.<sup>126</sup>

He further observed rather prophetically:

That if there is any class in England which deserves our confidence and upon whose votes we can place any reliance at all, it is the Labour Party, including the Democrats and the Socialists and Irish, of course.<sup>127</sup>

His popularity had risen to such a height that when he came to address a public meeting in Lahore at the anniversary of the Arya Samaj, the organisers had to adjourn the meeting because of the mammoth gathering and had to make special arrangements for the meeting the same day.<sup>128</sup> In his stirring speech, Lajpat Rai called upon Hindus and Muslims to form a united front against the foreign enemy and concluded with the following words:

Our struggle for freedom must be carried on in India. . . the tree of the nation calls for blood, world history was written in letters of blood, let us crown our national movement with martyrdom.<sup>129</sup>

The speech, which was cited by the Punjab Government in support of its decision to deport Lajpat Rai in 1907, foreshadowed the coming turbulent events of nationalist struggle in the aftermath of the Partition of Bengal.<sup>130</sup>

This patriotic impulse, which acquired greater momentum in the succeeding events like the famous Surat split of 1907, was already evident in the early phase of Lajpat Rai's public life. Whether it was the spread of Arya Samaj or the promotion of Hindi, whether it was the communal issue or the interests of the Hindus, his nationalistic ardour was unmistakable. He never sacrificed his convictions anywhere. And in everything he did he vindicated his principles.

## Notes

1. See *Daily Milap* (Urdu), Lahore, November 17, 1929, p. 4, for Lala Dhanpat Rai's statement on the controversy about his brother Lala Lajpat Rai's place of birth. Daniel Argov has wrongly mentioned Jagraon as Lajpat Rai's birthplace. Actually he was born at his maternal uncle's place, Dhudike. cf. Daniel Argov, *Moderates and Extremists in the Indian Nationalist Movement* (Asia, Bombay, 1967), p. 59.

2. Ibid. Also see N.B. Sen (ed.), *Punjab's Eminent Hindus* (New Book Society, Lahore, 1944), p. 6.

3. See *The People* (Published every Sunday by the Tilak School of Politics, Lahore, Ed. Lajpat Rai), Vol. VIII. Nos. 15 & 16, April 13, & 18, 1929, pages 1-63, *The Story of My Life* (Serialised) *Lajpat Rai Number*. Also see V.C. Joshi (ed.), *Lala Lajpat Rai : Autobiographical Writings* (University Publishers, Delhi, 1965), pp. 14-15.

4. Ibid., p. 14

5. Ibid., p. 13. Lajpat Rai writes, "For the first twenty-five or thirty years of his life he was a believer in Islam, according to the Sunni School. He used to recite *namaz* and to observe the *ramzan* fast; and he cultivated acquaintances among the Ulemas and Maulvis. When Sir Syed Ahmed started his socio-religious mission, he read Sir Syed's works and became a follower of his. Upto the fortieth year he was a Muslim of the Syed Ahmed School . . . . During this period he was antagonistic to Hinduism and the Arya Samaj, and used to criticise the teaching of both in the Brahmo Press . . . ."

6. See the Foreword to D.S. Sahota, *Lala Lajpat Rai : His Life and Thought* (Lajpat Rai Study Centre, Dhudike, 1974), p. iii.

7. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 14.

8. Lajpat Rai recollected: "When I consider how devoted a Muslim is to his religion, how he regards the propagation of Islam as a bounden duty and how he believes that the highest reward is attached to converting a man to Islam, I can well imagine what great pressure must my father's Muslim friends have brought to bear upon him until his 40th year, and how often they must have tried to induce him to become a Mussalman openly. . . ." See *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

9. Ibid., p. 15

10. Ibid., p. 23

11. Ibid., p. 77

12. Ibid., p. 23

13. Ibid., p. 77

14. Ibid., p. 79. For a critical account of the Urdu-Hindi controversy see N. G. Barrier, "Muslim Politics in the Punjab, 1870-1890", *The Punjab Past and Present*, April, 1971, p. 88.

15. See Jyotish Chandra Ghosal, *Life of Lala Lajpat Rai*, (The Ramkrishna Publishing Works, Calcutta, 1928), p. 1. "From the very beginn-

ing", writes Jyotish Chandra Ghosal, "Lalaji was convinced that the fabric of Free India must be built on the bedrock of literacy, social reform and racial unity."

16. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 79.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 81

18. *Ibid.*, p. 27

19. See Guru Dutta, *The Works of the Late Pandit Gurudatta Vidyarthi, M.A. with a Biographical Sketch* (The Arya Printing, Publishing & General Trading Co., Ltd., Lahore, 1912, 3rd. edition), p. 6.

20. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 31.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Norman G. Barrier, "The Arya Samaj and Congress Politics in the Punjab : 1894-1908". *The Punjab Past and Present*, October 1971, pp. 345-6.

24. Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj* (Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1915), p. 183.

25. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., pp. 31-2.

26. See Sri Ram Sharma, *Mahatma Hansraj : Maker of the Modern Punjab*, (Arya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha, Lahore, 1941), p. 43.

27. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 33. Lajpat Rai was one of the founder members of the D.A.V. College, Lahore. The College was established in 1886. See *The Arya Patrika*, June 30, 1888.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-3.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-4.

31. See Lajpat Rai, *Life of Pandit Guru Dutta Vidyarthi, M.A.* (Virjand Press, Lahore, 1891), pp. 51-2.

32. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 45.

33. See *Lala Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word* (Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1907), pp. 1-38.

34. See *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 85.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom* (Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1915), p. 62.

37. See *Report of the Fourth Indian National Congress, Allahabad, 1888*, pp. 22-3.

38. Dhananjay Keer, *Lokamanya Tilak : Father of the Indian Freedom Struggle* (Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969), p. 52. N.G. Jog is mistaken in observing that Tilak, Gokhale and Lajpat Rai all entered the Congress in 1889. Cf. *Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak* (Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1970, Second Reprint,) p. 42.

39. See *Report of the Fifth I.N.C. Bombay 1889*, p. 19.

40. *Ibid.*

41. See Ram Gopal, *Lokamanya Tilak : A Biography* (Asia, Bombay, 1954), pp. 58-9.

42. The safety-valve function of the Congress was later enunciated by Lajpat Rai in *Young India*. Wedderburn too interpreted A. O. Hume on

similar lines. See Lajpat Rai, *Young India : An Interpretation and History of the Nationalist Movement from Within* (B.W. Huebsch and Co., New York, 1916), pp. 130-3. Also William Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume : Father of the Indian National Congress (1829-1912)*, (T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1913), p. 50.

43. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., pp. 87-8.

44. Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, op. cit., p. 155.

Lajpat Rai believed : "The foreign rulers of India have never been quite happy about the Arya Samaj. They have always disliked its independence, its tone and its propaganda of self-confidence, self-help and self-reliance. The national side of its activities has aroused their antipathy."

45. *Autobiographical Writings* op. cit., pp. 46-65.

46. *Arya Dharm : Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab*, (Manohar Book Service 1976), p. 315.

47. See Sri Ram Sharma, *Mahatma Hansraj*, op. cit., p. 64

48. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

49. *The Tribune*, April 28, 1897.

50. N.A.I. Home (Public) Deposit Proceedings, June 1905.

51. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

52. One section of the Arya Samaj increasingly assailed the Muslims. This hardened the existing divisions and tended to institutionalize old patterns of conflict and distrust. See Kenneth W. Jones, "The Arya Samaj and Communal Tensions in the Punjab, 1877-1897", *Journal of Asian Studies*, December, 1968, pp. 4-15.

53. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., pp. 73-5.

54. Ibid. p. 75.

55. Ibid., p. 76.

56. *The Tribune* October 24, 1899.

57. See Sri Ram Sharma, *Lajpat Rai : A History of the Arya Samaj*, (Orient Longman, Bombay, 1967), p. 130. Also see Dhanpati Pandey, *The Arya Samaj and Indian Nationalism*, (S. Chand, New Delhi, 1972), pp. 96-101.

58. See *Lala Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit., "Famine Orphans and Waifs", pp. 44-54.

59. Ibid., p. 48.

60. pp. 47-8. He did not spare Hindus either. At a social conference, convened in Calcutta under the Presidentship of Chandavarkar, in December 1901, "Lala Lajpat Rai, who had come from relief work in the famine areas, charged the Hindus with being less public spirited and humane in helping the orphans than the missions". See S. Natarajan, *A Century of Social Reform in India*. (Asia, Bombay, 1959), p. 105.

61. J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, (Munshiram Manohar Lal, Delhi, Indian Edition 1967—first published in 1915), p. 127. He wrote : "Lala Lajpat Rai, struck with the work of the Salvation Army, started . . . in Lahore the Vedic Salvation Army . . ."

62. H.C.E. Zacharias, *Renasant India*, (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1933), p. 41. Referring to the activities of Lajpat Rai in support

of the Arya Samaj he writes that his "first independent contribution to the sect consisted in the Famine Relief he organised in the years 1899-1900".

63. See *Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1901*. (Calcutta, 1901), p. 77.

64. Ibid.

65. Pt. Nandkumardev Sharma, *Lajpat Mahima* (Calcutta, Pustak Bhandar, 1923), pp. 226-60.

66. Ibid., pp., 93-4.

67. The first joint stock bank under Indian management—*The Oudh Commercial Bank* was started in 1881.

68. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 95.

69. Ibid., pp. 95-7.

70. Norman G. Barrier, "The Arya Samaj and Congress Politics in the Punjab 1894-1908", *The Panjab Past and Present*, October 1971, pp. 344-5.

71. Ibid.

72. Jones, *Arya Dharm*, op. cit., p. 249.

73. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, (Padma Publications, Bombay, 1946), Vol. I., p. 42.

74. See Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, op. cit., p. 331.

75. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 42.

He writes about the resolution of Lajpat Rai, "... as a direct result of their deliberations, we note that the first Industrial Exhibition in Calcutta was held in 1901 and this institution has gone on steadily improving until in the latter day developments, the Khaddar and Swadeshi Exhibitions have come to replace the old order of things."

76. See *Report of the Sixteenth I.N.C., Lahore, 1900*, p. 79.

77. Lajpat Rai, "A Few Reminiscences of the Late Lokamanya Tilak", See *The People*, August 2, 1925. Also see Dhananjay Keer, *Lokamanya Tilak*, op. cit., p. 178 Dhananjay Keer has given an interesting account of their meeting at Lahore. "... Lajpat Rai invited Tilak to dine with him and to meet a few friends there. Lajpat Rai inquired from Tilak whether he would take food prepared by his wife or he should have it prepared by a particular caste of Brahmin if necessary. For Lajpat Rai observed 'he (Tilak) was an orthodox revivalist. I was a social reformer. He was a pucca Sanatanist.' Tilak, however, dined with Lala Lajpat Rai."

78. *Kayastha Samachar*, August, 1901.

79. Jones, *Arya Dharm*, op. cit., p. 251.

80. *Kayastha Samachar*, November, 1901.

81. *Report of the Seventeenth I.N.C. Calcutta, 1901*, p. 68.

82. *Kayastha Samachar*, January, 1902.

83. See V.C. Joshi (Ed.), *Lala Lajpat Rai : Writings & Speeches, Vol. I* (University Publishers, Delhi, 1966), pp. 26-9.

84. Surendranath Banerjea's Presidential Speech. See *Report of the Eighteenth I.N.C. Ahmedabad, 1902*, p. 63.

85. See Indra Vidyavachaspati, *Arya Samaj Ka Itihas*, Vol. II, (Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Delhi, 1957), p. 112.
86. *Report of the Nineteenth I.N.C. Madras*, 1903, p. 11.
87. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 97.
88. *The Tribune*, July 15, 1904.
89. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 99. See *The Panjabee*, October 3, 1904.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid., p. 100.
92. Ibid.
93. *Report of the Twentieth I. N. C. Bombay*, 1904, pp. 28 and 37.
94. Ibid., Resolution XV. See Also Annie Besant, op. cit., p. 402.
95. See H. P. Mody, *Sir Pherozeshah Mehta : A Political Biography* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963), p. 256.
96. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 100.
97. See, Dhananjay Keer, op. cit., p. 217.
98. *Report of the Twentieth I N. C. Bombay*, 1904, p. 231. Also see Annie Besant, op. cit., p. 413.
99. Norman G. Barrier, "The Arya Samaj and Congress Politics in the Punjab", *The Punjab Past and Present*, October, 1971, p. 354.
100. See *The Panjabee* May 15, 1905. Here Lajpat Rai openly criticised the British Government and said that Government was doing nothing to prevent diseases, pestilence and famine. He criticised the educational policy as well as the administrative policy of the Government. Also see NAI, Home Political Department Proceedings, Part-A, Nos. 148-235, August, 1907.
101. Ibid.
102. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 105.
103. See V. C. Joshi (Ed.) *Lajpat Rai : Writings and Speeches*, Vol. I, op. cit.; Introduction, p. xxix.
104. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 105.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid.
107. See Lajpat Rai's letter to Ganga Prasad Varma, London, August 3, 1905 cited in *Lajpat Rai : Writings and Speeches*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. XXIX.
108. Address delivered by Lajpat Rai at a meeting held in the Stockport Labour Church, Lancashire on July 27, 1905. See *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 67-78.
109. Ibid., p. 68.
110. Ibid., p. 69.
111. Ibid., pp. 70-3.
112. Ibid., p. 78.
113. *India* (London), August 4, 1905.
114. Ibid., August 18, 1905.
115. Ibid., October 6 and 13, 1905.
116. *The Tribune*, October 28, 1905.



117. See *NAI Home Political Department Proceedings*, (Confidential) Part—A, No. 4, April, 1912.

118. *India* (London), October 13, 1905.

119. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 108.

120. *Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, (Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1969, Second Edition), p. 110.

121. *India* (London), October 13, 1905.

122. The Partition of Bengal was effected on July 19, 1905. See R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India* (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1963), Vol. II., p. 6.

123. *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 79-86.

124. Ibid.

125. Ibid.

126. Ibid., p. 89.

127. Ibid.

128. Ibid., p. 109.

129. *Punjab Native Newspapers Report : Paisa Akhbar* 12, and 13th December, 1905, p. 6. That part of Lajpat Rai's speech which was alleged to be seditious runs as :

"Youngmen, your blood is warm. That national tree requires your life blood for its watering. Heaven has written in letters of blood the history of the intellectual advancement of a nation, i.e., it has been ordained that a country can advance intellectually only if its members practise the virtue of self-sacrifice. Your sacrifices will leave their mark in the history of the world . . ."

130. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 109.

Recollecting the event later in 1914, Lajpat Rai wrote : "In concluding the speech I had said that I saw blood raining from the national sky : the sky looked clear, but specks of blood were already visible. In 1905 nobody had anticipated even in imagination the things that the nationalist did later on but a student of history could ascertain in which direction the wind was blowing."

## CHAPTER II

### Lajpat Rai and the Emergence of the Extremists

The year 1905 was notable among other things for the emergence of a new leadership in the Indian National Congress represented by Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, or Lal-Bal-Pal as they were known. The moderates' programme of prayers and petitions lost its hold in the wake of government's refusal to meet the political and economic demands of the Congress. The repressive measures of the government against the growing nationalist movement induced these leaders to advocate greater radicalism in the Congress. Thus the ideology and technique of liberal nationalism itself were responsible for the rise of militancy in nationalistic politics. These nationalists drew inspiration from India's past and tried to infuse national pride and self-respect among the people. They considered the interests of Britain to be totally antagonistic to Indian interests.

Lajpat Rai emerged as the undisputed spokesman of this new spirit in Punjab. The partition of Bengal in 1905 aroused his robust nationalism and he once again became active in politics. The happenings in Barisal under the regime of Bampfylde Fuller led to a protest meeting at Lahore. Supporting the anti-partition agitation in the meeting on December 9, 1905, Lajpat Rai said:

It will be criminal to shut our eyes when we find that British modes of administration are being changed for Russian models and that the hitherto professedly constitutional form of government is being openly converted into an irresponsible military despotism.<sup>1</sup>

He exhorted his audience to oppose the high-handedness of the British bureaucrats. The dictates of loyalty demanded a loud cry so as to reach the ears of those who were ultimately responsible for good government in India. He said:

Loyalty to law is loyalty to Government. If it is loyalty to support the government in all its constitutional functions and to defend it against all attacks made upon it by enemies, it is still greater loyalty to defend the law even against the government itself.<sup>2</sup>

Further:

I have, therefore, no doubt that we are perfectly loyal to the law of the land when we protest against the illegal and unconstitutional acts of the local government of Bengal, whereby the latter aims at terrifying the people of those provinces who are carrying on a strictly legal and constitutional agitation against the split of their beloved province into two. . . .<sup>3</sup>

During the anti-partition agitation, the ideals of Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education were voiced. All nationalist leaders like Tilak, Pal, Aurobindo Ghose, Lajpat Rai organised a country-wide campaign through the press and the platform to popularise these ideas. The boycott especially was the creed of the new school. It was a programme of direct action in which the masses could participate and the pressure of which could be felt by the British government. It was at the same time an assertion of India's political, economic and social rights against the despotic foreign rule.

Lajpat Rai's support to these measures was spontaneous. He favoured the boycott of foreign goods and the Swadeshi move as it sought to undo the economic imbalance prevailing in the country. It could save the country from further exploitation and economic ruination. This twin economic programme was also effective in steadily diminishing the nation's reliance on foreign goods. Boycott and Swadeshi were thus inseparable. If boycott was a negative weapon, Swadeshi offered a positive solution. The Swadeshi movement naturally gave "an impetus

to Indian industries and manufacturers", while the boycott aimed "at the protection of the same from unequal and unscrupulous competition from without". To Lajpat Rai, it was a perfectly legitimate weapon to be wielded by a law abiding people.<sup>4</sup>

The four-fold programme of Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education, in the initial stages, was undoubtedly designed to compel the government to rescind the partition of Bengal and stop repression. But the emphasis of the leaders of the militant school on Hindu revivalism prompted the government to alienate the Muslims from the national movement. Lajpat Rai was quick to sense the intentions of the rulers and lost no time in warning the people, irrespective of caste or creed, against their playing into the hands of the British officials.

"This sort of diplomacy", he told them,

is usually one of the last weapons that are wielded in self-defence by a tottering despotism. The Congress agitation was the first articulate protest against English despotism in India. As soon as the protest was made the despotism set itself to the task of dividing the people and fanning class and religious prejudices.<sup>5</sup>

He further said:

Ever since, Mahomedans have been set against Hindus, Sikhs against both, agriculturists against money-lenders and so on. . . . It contains within itself some inflammable elements which once let loose in the end, spare neither friend nor foe . . . .<sup>6</sup>

He advised his countrymen to be more nationalistic. Their common heritage and common enemy could cement the bonds of unity. There was a widely-held opinion that far from being secular, Lajpat Rai was communal in outlook. But the following statement could not have come from a communalist. Asserting the great need for a broader outlook of secularism, he stated:

My appeal to you does not mean that you should cease to be Hindus or Mahomedans. Nay if you do that I will

cease to respect you. By all means love your respective religions as deeply as you can, try to serve your respective communities to the best of your ability, nay even exert to strengthen them between themselves, but never play in the hands of the common enemy whoever he may be.<sup>7</sup>

The Muslims doubted the efficacy of boycott by the Congress against partition and considered themselves allies of the Englishmen in India. Lajpat Rai felt their vested interests had made them shortsighted. In the interest of communal harmony and for fighting the British more resolutely, he urged them to join hands with the Hindus in making a unanimous protest against the government's high-handedness. This would make the Hindus equally responsive to the Muslims at the hour of their grief. In a prophetic statement that anticipated the Hindu-Muslim unity during the Khilafat movement of 1919, he said :

One word to my Mohammedan brethren. Suppose, gentlemen, the Government were to extend the same treatment to such of you as are inclined to support the Sultan of Turkey in his troubles with European Powers, will you not naturally expect your Hindu fellow subjects to sympathise with you and to support you in exercise of your constitutional rights and privileges? What is at the present moment meted out to Hindus principally may at any minute be extended to Mohammedans also. . . .<sup>8</sup>

To revert to 1905, the Benaras session of the Congress presided over by G. K. Gokhale raised the banner of the Extremists high. Disagreements between the Extremists and Moderates came to the surface. The enthusiasm of the delegates for the leaders of the new movement was at a high pitch. The session truly marked the beginning of a new spirit in the Congress. The very first resolution in the Subjects Committee about the welcoming of the Prince of Wales to India was opposed by Lajpat Rai. Tilak supported Lajpat Rai's stand. Later recollecting his role at the Banaras Session, Lajpat Rai wrote:

I opposed the resolution. Severe famine prevailed in the country and people were dying of hunger; besides, the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon had created great unrest. To call the Prince of Wales at the moment was a bureaucratic subterfuge, the intention of the inviters being to allay political unrest by diverting public attention to gala shows.<sup>9</sup>

Gokhale and Surendranath Banerjea exerted all their influence and saw the resolution through the Subjects Committee.<sup>10</sup> Undeterred, Lajpat Rai announced his determination to oppose the resolution in the general meeting of the Congress. This alerted the old guard of the Congress including Munshi Madho Lal, Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Benaras Congress. Lajpat Rai, Tilak and their associates were "dubbed as sedition-mongers and *badmashas*".<sup>11</sup> Munshi Madho Lal went to the extent of informing the Superintendent of Police and asked the Deputy Commissioner of Benaras to be present in the Congress pandal to avert any untoward happening in the session. Lajpat Rai later wrote:

Threats were held out to us in the morning. Some said we were bringing the province into disgrace, others feared the Congress would be dead. . . . But our resolve remained unaffected.<sup>12</sup>

At this time Gokhale used his statesmanship by successfully persuading Lajpat Rai to avoid opposition for his sake. Lajpat Rai in turn persuaded Tilak and both abstained from the session while the resolution was being passed. On the last day Lajpat Rai addressed the Congress. In his speech he favoured the use of boycott and the practice of Swadeshi on a nationwide scale, views that were contrary to those of Surendranath Banerjea, Gokhale and Madan Mohan Malaviya on the subject. Asserting the utility of passive resistance, he said :

Let me tell you, what are the methods adopted by Englishmen in England when they have a grievance to be listened to by Government. The method which is perfectly legitimate, perfectly constitutional and perfectly justifiable, is the method of passive resistance . . . .<sup>13</sup>

Then came the most memorable part of his speech:

I must tell you that the message which the people of England wanted to send to you through me was the message that in our utterances, in our agitations and in our fight and struggle for liberty, we ought to be more manly than we have been heretofore. . . . An Englishman hates or dislikes nothing like beggary. I think a beggar deserves to be hated.

As such it was their duty to show to the Englishmen that. . . we have risen to the sense of consciousness. . . we are no longer beggars and . . . we are subjects of an Empire where people are struggling to achieve that position which is their right by right of natural law.<sup>14</sup>

In conclusion he struck a note of caution:

If you have adopted this manly and vigorous policy, be prepared for the logical consequence. Don't conceal your heads, don't behave like cowards. Once having adopted that manly policy, stick to it till the last.<sup>15</sup>

The speech which drew praise from Romesh Chandra Dutt, came like a bombshell, with the Bombay delegates almost turning pale in the course of his forceful eloquence. Here is Lajpat Rai's own estimate of it:

This was the first speech of its kind delivered from the Congress platform, and in a way might be said to have laid the foundations of the nationalist wing. . . .<sup>16</sup>

Incidentally this speech gives a lie to the commonly held belief that it was Tilak who first mooted the idea of passive resistance. Tilak's biographer, N. G. Jog admits this.<sup>17</sup>

The issue of boycott was tactfully avoided by Gokhale in the Benaras Congress. But the idea was already in the air.<sup>18</sup> 1906 was the year when Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education were popularized. This four-fold programme of the Extremists further divided the Congress. Both the camps were prepared for a trial of strength.

In August, Gokhale told Morley that the aim of the Congress was the attainment of self-government within the Empire.<sup>19</sup> But Lajpat Rai, Tilak, B.C. Pal and Aurobindo dismissed prayers and petitions to the British Government as "mendicancy".<sup>20</sup>

The next Congress session in 1906 was convened at Calcutta. It seemed from the correspondence of Gokhale that both Tilak and Khaparde canvassed for Lajpat Rai as the President for this session.<sup>21</sup> When D.E. Wacha learnt of this move he was far from being happy. He wrote to Gokhale on July 21:

Tilak who knowing how he is regarded by the sober section of the Congress Party, has been moving heaven and earth to get Lajpat Rai elected for the Presidentship! Today Lajpat Rai and tomorrow Tilak! Where will the Congress be ? . . . It will be too late when the Congress is captured by these people.<sup>22</sup>

Even William Wedderburn was not happy and made an appeal to Tilak and Lajpat Rai for maintaining the status quo in the Congress. In his letter dated August 23, 1906, he appealed to them to use their "influence with impulsive friends and keep the Congress on its present lines, at any rate until Mr. Morley has had time to get his feet on firm ground . . .". "It takes some time", he said, "to turn a big ship, but much has been gained when the helm has been put about and there is no longer active propulsion in the wrong direction."<sup>23</sup> The truth was that the Nationalists of Calcutta led by B.C. Pal wanted Tilak to preside over the Calcutta session whereas Tilak's lieutenant Khaparde wanted Lajpat Rai to preside.<sup>24</sup>

Lajpat Rai gave a lively account of the contest for the presidentship. He wrote:

The Extremists of Bengal wanted to elect Tilak as President for the Session. The Moderates led by the Bombay people and Mr. Gokhale, were against the proposal. The force of public opinion in Bengal was thrown on the side of Tilak. But eventually after consultation with the Bombay leaders the Presidentship was offered to Dadabhai Naoroji. When his assent was received it was broadcast even before



it had been considered by the Reception Committee. The idea was that as Dadabhai Naoroji was held in great esteem by the country, nobody would oppose his election, particularly when it was known that he had agreed to the proposal. Probably he had been cabled that his acceptance was necessary to save the Congress from a grave crisis.<sup>25</sup>

Requesting Dadabhai Naoroji to accept the Presidentship, Surendranath Banerjea wrote to him on October 25, 1906:

Those who were canvassing for Tilak have given us the assurance that they will unanimously join in electing you as President and have authorised me to communicate the fact to you. . . . You have saved us from a great crisis.<sup>26</sup>

The Extremists were outwitted, according to Dadabhai's biographer.<sup>27</sup>

Punjab showed an exceptional interest and enthusiasm in the Calcutta session, sending a contingent of 139 delegates out of a total of 1663.<sup>28</sup> The Government too was interested in the happenings at the session. M.N. Das writes:

The extremists and the moderates met at Darbangha's house in a preliminary meeting to decide on the resolutions to be passed. Khaparde and B.C. Pal were irreconcilable from the first. They would listen to no reason and adhered firmly to the contention that no faith whatever could be placed in the British or the British Government.<sup>29</sup>

Tilak and Lajpat Rai were less violent and inclined to yield on certain points, but generally they maintained their extremist position. Gokhale was "both moderate and statesman-like and Surendranath Banerjea was fairly reasonable." Moti Lal Ghose leaned towards the extremist policy. However, the moderates carried the day. The majority of the delegates also were in favour of the moderate view. Darbangha believed that the extremists were anxious to have the resolutions and amendments put to vote, but by much labour and tact the moderates, led by Gokhale, avoided that.<sup>30</sup>

Before the commencement of the session, the moderates invited Minto to inaugurate the Congress exhibition. The

Viceroy delivered an address on the occasion in which he criticised boycott and supported "honest Swadeshi",<sup>31</sup> which made the extremists angry. At a public meeting, organised by B.C. Pal, to reply to Lord Minto's criticism Lajpat Rai declared himself to be "wholeheartedly Swadeshi" and said, "For us—a subject race there was no path but that of struggle."<sup>32</sup>

Tilak also criticised Minto's pronouncement on "honest Swadeshi". He said, 'Lord Minto had spoken of what he called honest Swadeshi dissociated from political association and 'political aspirations'. This definition of Swadeshi was incorrect, misleading and distorts the truth."<sup>33</sup> In fact, "Swadeshi could not be so elastic as to accommodate even the Viceroy of India as a supporter".<sup>34</sup>

Tilak, Khaparde, B.C. Pal, Aurobindo Ghose and Lajpat Rai convened many public meetings with the exclusion of the moderates to enlist support for the Extremists' programme. According to Pattabhi Sitaramayya, "The courage that appeared wanting in 1905 was soon recovered in 1906."<sup>35</sup> But Lajpat Rai used his restraining influence, and "advised them repeatedly against spending away their whole strength in enthusiasm."<sup>36</sup> Knowing the strength of the foreign enemy, he remarked, "We must move with caution and deliberation, so that our movement might not be nipped in the bud."<sup>37</sup> But he later confessed that his moderating influence had done little to restrain the Bengal Extremists in their enthusiasm.<sup>38</sup>

The high watermark of the Calcutta session was Dadabhai Naoroji's declaration that the goal of the Congress was to seek "self-government or Swaraj like that of the United Kingdom or the colonies".<sup>39</sup> This impressed Lajpat Rai immensely. Of 'Swaraj he wrote:

The aim of all our efforts and the object of all our agitation, has been placed before us in clear, unambiguous and unmistakable terms. In a happy and inspired moment Mr. Naoroji struck upon that noble word—"Swaraj", which sums up all our political aspiration. Henceforth, "Swaraj" is our war cry, our all-inspiring and all-absorbing aim in life. . . .<sup>40</sup>

The atmosphere in the Calcutta Congress was tense because of the rift between the moderates and the extremists on the question of Swadeshi and boycott. The resolution on these issues threatened to set off a parting of ways. The moderates were in favour of limiting the boycott only to Bengal whereas the extremists like B.C. Pal and others wanted it to have a nation-wide application. Heated discussions followed in which Pherozeshah Mehta was openly criticised, and veteran leaders like Gokhale and Madan Mohan Malaviya too were not spared.<sup>41</sup> Eventually, the resolutions on boycott<sup>42</sup> and on Swadeshi,<sup>43</sup> were passed only after certain modifications had been made by way of compromise.

One of the reasons for this clash was that the Congress leaders interpreted Swadeshi differently (each according to his own light), Pattabhi Sitaramayya has very cogently summed this up: "To Malaviya it meant the protection of indigenous industries; to Tilak it meant self-help, determination and sacrifice on the part of the nation in order to end the sad spectacle of the middle classes using foreign goods. To Lalaji, it meant the conserving of capital."<sup>44</sup>

In this session, Lajpat Rai played a significant role as a peace maker. In his own words:

To me it appeared that the difference in the attitude of the two groups was one of words only. So I moved an amendment, which though not accepted by the Extremist leaders was carried by a Majority. Bipin Chandra Pal and his party walked out. The leader of the Moderates, Gokhale, was pleased with me and said I had saved the situation. . . .<sup>45</sup>

He further wrote:

There is little doubt that if Dadabhai Naoroji had not occupied the chair, and had I not intervened, all that happened at Surat next year would have happened at the Calcutta Congress.<sup>46</sup>

Lajpat Rai made efforts to heal the schism between moderates and extremists in the Punjab Congress too. Lala Harkishan Lal and his conservative associates organized the Punjab

Moderates against Lajpat Rai and his Arya Samajist followers for their affiliation with the extremist politics. Lajpat Rai was surprised at this moderate opposition. He wanted to carry out constructive political programme in the province but the attitude of the Punjab moderates regarding the boycott and the partition of Bengal was not at all encouraging. Lajpat Rai, in his efforts to bring unity, won them over by agitating for issues like income-tax rates, British high-handedness and forced labour. He could thus receive their help in the establishment of the branches of the Congress in the districts at the October provincial conference at Ambala. Lajpat Rai also regained the support of the Muslims for the Congress by assuring them of a non-sectarian and broad programme covering the entire educated class. As a result, Fazl-i-Hussain led the prominent Muslims in establishing a pro-Congress Muslim League and extended wholehearted support to the meetings organized by Lajpat Rai. Lajpat Rai's many opponents followed suit and joined the Congress at district and provincial levels.<sup>47</sup> As Norman G. Barrier writes:

Although Lajpat Rai and the Aryas sided with Tilak at the 1906 Congress, the truce between Punjabi moderates and extremists emerged intact. Spurred on by the assurances of Lajpat Rai that Punjabi politicians could learn from both political camps, Aryas and Hindu moderates cooperated in spreading the Congress movement to the *mofussil*. By February of 1907 the Punjab Congress had branches in over twenty district towns. Between 1899 and 1907 Punjabi Aryas had thus contributed significantly to the growth and spread of the provincial congress. Although the Arya preoccupation with practical politics and efficient methods for the regeneration of India had led the Punjab Congress into alliance with the extremists, Lajpat Rai and his lieutenants had been able to reconcile a number of diverse political interests and seemed in 1907 on the verge of forming a strong national party with a firm institutional base.<sup>48</sup>

From the beginning of 1907, Lajpat Rai engaged himself in advocating Swadeshi, boycott and patriotism in Punjab.

The province was already in a state of political upheaval and his utterances had a tremendous effect. The decision of the Punjab Government in passing the Lyallpur Canal Colonies Bill and the Alienation of Land (Amendment) Bill along with the proposed increase in the Bari Doab Canal water rate had caused widespread resentment. These measures placed restrictions on the settlers in the canal colonies of Lyallpur, Montgomery and Multan. A majority of these settlers were either ex-servicemen or recruits to the Indian Army. Lajpat Rai wrote articles against the proposed land reforms. The *Panjabee*, too, supported the cause of these agriculturists and thereby incurred the displeasure of the government which took legal action against it.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, Lajpat Rai as President of the Indian Association, Lahore, invited Gokhale to visit Lahore. Gokhale came on February 15, 1907. The same day the Manager and the Editor of the *Panjabee* were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.<sup>50</sup> The popular feelings ran high and Gokhale was accorded a hearty welcome. His visit at this critical juncture "served as fuel to the fire that was already alight in the Punjab".<sup>51</sup>

Ironically enough, the British government became suspicious even of Gokhale. It was alleged that his influence had permeated the ranks of the servicemen in the Punjab and roused them against the Government. At least Malik Umar Hyat Khan reported that he held Gokhale chiefly answerable for the disturbances in the province. He said, "It was his arrival there and his speeches there which set everything in a blaze."<sup>52</sup> Viceroy Minto in a fit of disappointment accepted this as probably true and termed Gokhale "as big a revolutionist as Lajpat and rest of them".<sup>53</sup>

The agrarian agitation in the Punjab received full support from Lajpat Rai.<sup>54</sup> At this time Ajit Singh, uncle of the famous revolutionary Bhagat Singh, was also working hard for the peasantry. His fiery speeches had won him wide influence and popularity in the Lyallpur canal colony area. Lajpat Rai knew Ajit Singh but did not approve of his political activities.<sup>55</sup>

Many public meetings were organised to oppose the colonisation Bill. A public meeting was convened at Lyallpur on

March 22, 1907, which was addressed by Lajpat Rai on the invitation of Choudhury Shahab-ud-din.

Whence did the Government bring these lands? The blood of our forefathers was shed on it, we conquered it and inhabited it, these lands are therefore either ours or God's. . . . Government officials are servants to serve us and not to rule over us. Do not fear the jails nor death.<sup>56</sup>

But the most 'seditious' speech was that of Ajit Singh who told the audience that three hundred million Indians could easily defeat the hundred and fifty thousand Englishmen in India in spite of their guns, and urged the peasants to revolt.<sup>57</sup>

The Rawalpindi disturbances in April, following the speeches of Ajit Singh and Hans Raj Sahney created a stir in the province. The authorities apprehended danger.<sup>58</sup> They wanted to curb "the spreading unrest in a land that supplied to the army the cream of its soldiery". During the Rawalpindi riots a Pathan approached Lajpat Rai saying that a regiment of soldiers was awaiting his orders. But suspecting him to be a spy, he gave no credence to his information.<sup>59</sup>

The Government received information about some communication from Lajpat Rai and other agitators to the Amir of Afghanistan. Minto attached no importance to it, thinking that the Amir probably would put such letters in his wastepaper basket.<sup>60</sup> He (Minto) wrote: "But it shows how immensely important his friendship is to us. If he was in league with sedition in India supported by the frontier tribes, we would be in a nice dilemma."<sup>61</sup> The Punjab Government did not realise the true nature of its reactionary administration. It kept the Government of India and Secretary of State in dark regarding the real causes of disturbances in the province. Fixing the responsibility on the political agitators it went on piling repression on repression. The plea of the vulnerability of the Punjab because of its proximity to the frontier was exploited to the full. Accordingly Sir Risley, Secretary to the Government of India, was informed by the Chief Secretary of Punjab, E. Maclagan, about the dangerous activities of Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh. Lajpat Rai was considered a revolutionary and the brain behind the whole agrarian unrest.<sup>62</sup>

Sir Denzil Ibbetson, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab convinced Lord Minto of the seriousness of the situation in the province. He reported that the peasants had been incited to murder high officials and rise in revolt against the Punjab Government. He held the Arya Samaj alone to be behind the movement and brought to light the attempts made by them to infiltrate into the Sikh Regiment. And he impressed upon the higher authorities the need to prohibit public meetings and deport Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh.<sup>63</sup>

Minto's summary of the Punjab minute asking for the issue of warrant against Lala Lajpat Rai read:

The head and centre of the entire movement (of unrest in the Punjab) is Lala Lajpat Rai, a Khatri pleader. He is a revolutionary and a political enthusiast who is consumed with the most intense hatred for the British Government. His most prominent agent in disseminating sedition is Ajit Singh.<sup>64</sup>

The result was predictable. The heavy hand of repression fell on Lajpat Rai. He was arrested at his home and deported to Mandalay on May 9, 1907, under the Bengal Regulation III of 1818, without a hearing and without a trial before a regularly constituted tribunal of justice. A few hours before his arrest Lajpat Rai wrote a letter to the *Panjabee*, in which he clearly expressed the real causes of the Punjab disturbances. He wrote:

It is silly to reproach this or that man for having brought this state of things. To suggest that any one or any two or three men in the province possess the power or influence to bring about this state of things is both stupid and absurd ....Discontent, no doubt, there is and a great deal of it. But this discontent has been brought about by Anglo-Indians themselves and the causes of this may be thus summarised in chronological order:

- (a) The letters and articles, etc., that appeared in *the civil and Military Gazette*. . . .
- (b) The prosecution of the *Panjabee*, coupled with the refusal of the Government to take similar action against the *Civil and Military Gazette*.

- (c) The Colonization Bill.
- (d) The Land Alienation Act Amendment Bill.
- (e) The increase of canal rates on the Bari-Doab canal.
- (f) The abnormal increase of land revenue in the Rawalpindi District.
- (g) The appalling mortality from plague which has made the people sullen and labour scarce, and raised the wages abnormally.<sup>65</sup>

Lajpat Rai's remarks about the *Civil and Military Gazette* were very true.<sup>66</sup> His analysis of the political situation was also accurate.<sup>67</sup> But without giving heed to these causes the provincial Governors congratulated Minto for that "most excellent move" of the deportation of Lajpat Rai.<sup>68</sup> His deportation was meant to serve as a lesson to other Extremist leaders. Lamington, the Governor of Bombay wrote to Minto: "Our leaders here are keeping very quiet; evidently the chance of a cheap journey to the farthest portion of the Empire has no attractions when quietly conducted."<sup>69</sup>

The news created a stir among the nationalists. Tilak reacted sharply. Karandikar writes, "Immediately on getting news of Lalaji's deportation, Tilak returned to Poona from Sinhgad. 'Lallaji deported and Minto still alive'—these words used by him off-hand on reaching Poona correctly expressed the deep and country-wide resentment, which the high-handed action of Government was bound to provoke. Protest meetings and violent demonstrations throughout the country followed Lalaji's deportation. Mr. P. M. Bapat proposed an ultimatum to Mr. Morley demanding Lalaji's release within three months. Mr. Bapat proposed to shoot Mr. Morley dead if the ultimatum was left unheeded."<sup>70</sup> Tilak strongly believed that if Lajpat Rai was guilty of the charges made against him, he should be tried and if those charges were proved, he could be hanged for it. But his deportation without trial was unjustified.<sup>71</sup> Tilak further stated:

If one Lajpat Rai is deported, another ought to be found to take his place as readily as a junior collector steps into the shoes of a senior. It is vain to hope that the position



of moderates will affect the release of Lajpat Rai though it is well known that the Government do not mean to keep him in prison all his life.<sup>72</sup>

In reality, the deportation of Lajpat Rai was a great blow to the people of Punjab. It affected the Extremists too, though they kept the flame of nationalism burning by their protests and writings in support of the Lala. Aurobindo Ghose, through his editorials in *Bande Mataram*, reacted in a tone so characteristic of the Extremists.<sup>73</sup> He wrote:

The hour for speeches and fine writings is past. The Bureaucracy has thrown the gauntlet. We take it up. Men of the Punjab! Race of the Lion! Show these men who would stamp you into the dust that for one Lajpat Rai they have taken away, hundred Lajpats will arise in his place. Let them hear a hundred times louder your war cry "Jai-Hindustan".<sup>74</sup>

Sister Nivedita was shocked to hear the news of Lajpat Rai's deportation without trial. On the day of the deportation she wrote in her diary, "Is the Government Crazy"?<sup>75</sup> Kavi Subramaniya Bharathi commemorated the event in his composition, *Lajpatiyin Pralabham*.<sup>76</sup>

At Mandalay, Lajpat Rai was confined to the upper floor of a two-storeyed wooden building in the fort of the former King of Burma. He was neither allowed any newspapers nor visitors. His letters were suppressed. Even his brother was refused permission by the Punjab Government to see him.<sup>77</sup> No reasons were given to Lajpat Rai for his arrest. Months later he was informed, in reply to his insistent enquiries, that he had been arrested and deported under the Bengal Regulation III of 1818 for "raising a commotion within the Dominions of His Majesty the King Emperor of India". A copy of the warrant under which he was arrested was also supplied to him.<sup>78</sup>

In the absence of Lajpat Rai, the Punjab administration and a handful of its Indian loyalists laid the blame for the spread of sedition on the Arya Samajists.<sup>79</sup> Ibbetson took additional steps to root out "sedition". He arranged mass trials in Lahore and Rawalpindi for the Hindus and Aryas

suspected of "planning the riots". He also issued circulars warning officers that Hindus and Aryas "as a class" tended to be seditious and should be employed "only with the greatest care and scrutiny", Aryas in key posts should be watched and dismissed at the least sign of disloyalty.<sup>80</sup> To establish their innocence, 42 prominent leaders of the Arya Samaj expressed open disapproval of seditious methods of political agitation and dissociated themselves from any such move in an open letter to the *Civil and Military Gazette*.<sup>81</sup> The loyalists suspected Lala Lajpat Rai, Hansraj and Gurdas Ram to be fanatics and promoters of unconstitutional agitation.<sup>82</sup> To this, the leaders of the Arya Samaj replied:

We as members of the Arya Samaj and as subjects of the British Government, strongly disapprove of the conduct of fanatics, and declare that we have no sympathy with these doings. It is unfortunate that Lala Lajpat Rai and Lala Hans Raj and Gurudas Ram—prominent members of the Arya Samaj have been suspected of unconstitutional agitation. We believe they were advocates of constitutional agitation only, and the sedition had no place in their minds. We pray their innocence will be proved to the satisfaction of the Government.<sup>83</sup>

But the Government treated this rejoinder as a vain attempt "to escape the imputation of guilt. Denzil Ibbetson charged them with being a seditious body, and the loyalists criticised them for their attempt to excuse themselves by transferring the charge to others."<sup>84</sup>

Among the Indian rulers, Maharaja Sir Prabhu Narain Singh Bahadur of Banaras found in the deportation of Lajpat Rai an opportunity for the expression of loyalty to the British Raj.<sup>85</sup> Some of the Indian Muslims, of the loyalist variety, sent letters of congratulations to *Civil and Military Gazette* on the action. The arrest and deportation of Lajpat Rai made *the Englishman* comment jubilantly in the editorial, on June 20, 1907:

Lajpat Rai and his henchmen would have come to occupy striking and commanding positions from which they would

further defy the Government and pave the way for the rebellion—we use the word advisedly—which it was their desire to foment.<sup>86</sup>

Attempts were made by some Urdu papers owned by Muslims to establish his utterances as that of a rank seditionist.<sup>87</sup> But these were not the views of the entire Muslim population. The nationalist Muslims expressed their sympathies with Lajpat Rai. In the introduction to his *Story of My Deportation*, Lajpat Rai wrote with pride:

The whole country spoke like one man irrespective of caste or creed. The Mohammedan merchants of Ahmedabad and Surat gave a crushing reply to the lie circulated by Anglo-Indian journalists that the Mohammedans were happy at my deportation and had no sympathy with me. One of the big representative gatherings of Mohammedans held in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh that was reported to have expressed satisfaction at my deportation was attended by seven men only.<sup>88</sup>

In the British Parliament, questions were asked on May 13, 1907 about Lajpat Rai's arrest and deportation without trial even before he had actually reached Mandalay (Lajpat Rai reached the place on May 16, 1907). V. H. R u t h e r f o r d, O'Grady, William Redmond, Frederic Mackarness and Sir Henry Cotton were among those prominent members of parliament who frequently asked questions on the subject in the House of Commons.<sup>89</sup>

On 2 June, Ajit Singh too was arrested at Amritsar and deported to Mandalay. Lajpat Rai's arrest and deportation had a great impact on Lala Har Dayal's mind. He along with others, raised a Memorial Fund in London to commemorate the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh. He wrote to his brother in Delhi "to see if clay models of Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh could be made and sold at the next Diwali festival at Delhi".<sup>90</sup>

The method of deportation was becoming popular in the Government circles. The Governor of Madras, Arthur Lawley demanded the deportation of B.C. Pal who was then on a visit

to South India.<sup>91</sup> But Viceroy Minto who had grown wiser by then wrote to Arthur Lawley:

I am in full sympathy with your wish to deport Bipin Chandra Pal. I wish we had done it long ago, but I see no chance now of doing it, as they are getting anxious at home as to the measures we are taking, and though Morely had backed me up well, the deportation of Lajpat Rai has raised a storm of criticism which he will have to face at home.<sup>92</sup>

In England, John Morley made a full statement on June 7, 1907, in the Parliament on the deportation. There was, however, nothing new in what he said. He only supported Minto on the policy towards sedition in India. Minto being a man on the spot was in an advantageous position. He informed the Secretary of State about the deportation of Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh after they had been despatched to Mandalay. In the words of M.N. Das, "Morley disapproved some of these measures was ultimately forced to sustain the Viceroy."<sup>93</sup>

Although Morley defended the Indian government's action he was really in a tight situation. Luckily for him, the Conservatives and the Radicals did not storm his position in Parliament. Similarly his own party did not join the Irishmen and the Labour in support of the Extremists in India like Lajpat Rai. Otherwise the results could be catastrophic to both the Cabinet and Morley.<sup>94</sup>

At home, Gokhale was the only exception among the moderates who felt distressed at Lajpat Rai's deportation. He felt that they (the Government) "stuck to Lala Lajpat Rai simply because he was the most prominent political worker in the Province." He further stated:

We certainly do not want any disorders in the land, but the reforms which the Viceroys and the Secretary of State are contemplating will lose their meaning for us, if they cannot be had without the deportation out of India of such earnest and high-minded workers in the country's cause as Lala Lajpat Rai.<sup>95</sup>

Gokhale expressed similar views in his letter to William Wedderburn. He wrote:

Every day the feeling is getting stronger in the country that the Government of India sanctioned the proposal of Sir D. Ibbetson to deport Lala Lajpat Rai in a state of panic. . . . I think we must not rest till we have secured Lala Lajpat Rai's restoration to liberty. . . (his) deportation has literally convulsed the country from one end to the other.<sup>96</sup>

Meanwhile, Gokhale met the Viceroy and submitted to him a memorandum signed by influential persons. And he told him that the deportation of Lajpat Rai was a grave mistake.<sup>97</sup> H.W. Nevinnson also expressed similar views.<sup>98</sup> He had reasons to believe that the Government's attitude of hostility towards the Arya Samaj had prompted the action against Lajpat Rai.<sup>99</sup> He held Lajpat Rai in great esteem as a highly spiritual personality.<sup>100</sup> But F.A. Robertson was firmly convinced about Lajpat Rai's having been instrumental in making the Arya Samaj a political organisation.<sup>101</sup>

In Parliament, Mackarness asked Morley, on June 18, if Lajpat Rai had made any protest against his arrest. Morley replied that he had no information though the fact was that Lajpat Rai had submitted a representation to the Secretary of State for India.<sup>102</sup> But this was intercepted by the authorities in India and it reached its destination long after the release of Lajpat Rai.<sup>103</sup>

Lajpat Rai, undoubtedly, had a strong case against his unlawful incarceration. There was a sharp resentment even in Government circles against his prolonged detention. The Viceroy soon realised the rationale of this discontent in the Punjab and vetoed the Punjab Colonisation Bill on the grounds that "It was a very faulty piece of legislation",<sup>104</sup> in spite of the strong opposition of the Ibbetson's Government to such a course. This vetoing of the Bill was "the first success of popular agitation".<sup>105</sup> With the removal of the cause of discontent peaceful conditions were restored in the province. Thereafter Minto did not see the necessity of keeping Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh under detention. Accordingly he wrote to Morley:

As to Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh I have not a shadow of a doubt that we must in common justice release them and that the sooner we do so the better. Now that we have declared the Punjab to be quiet we cannot logically justify their further imprisonment.<sup>106</sup>

After examining all the evidences which the Punjab Government could produce against Lala Lajpat Rai, Minto ultimately had to make an honest confession:

Lajpat Rai is undoubtedly a man of high character and very much respected by his fellow-countrymen, and if, when I was asked to arrest him, I had known what I do now, I should have required much more evidence before agreeing.

He further observed:

I have never seen any evidence in support of this. He (Ibbetson) confuses unrest with sedition.<sup>107</sup>

In England Morley faced a volley of questions about Lajpat Rai. He conveyed his plight to Risley at Wimbledon on August 24, when he said, "I cannot meet Parliament next session with that man still in confinement."<sup>108</sup> Recalling his role in the happenings Sir C. Sanakaran Nair wrote:

I did what was in my power to induce the India office to put pressure on the Viceroy to change the attitude. There was an order by Lord Morley after the arrest of Lajpat Rai to Mr. Ibbetson, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, that in future no such arrest should be made and no proceedings should be taken against such alleged offenders without the sanction of the Viceroy. It was for this reason that Lord Willingdon in Madras, and Lord Lloyd in Bombay were not allowed to proceed against Gandhi.<sup>109</sup>

Soon Morley took a decision to free Lajpat Rai but not without a protest from the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab to the Viceroy. In reply to this Morley wrote:

According to his line of argument, as the quiet is only ephemeral, and as Lajpat Rai is to be kept locked up until

the Ephemeral has changed into the Eternal, he will remain at Mandalay for ever. Nothing could be more childish, and it only shows that a man may be capable sort of administrator (if Ibbetson really is that) of a province, and yet fail altogether to face the complex Indian (and Parliamentary) question as a whole.<sup>110</sup>

Lajpat Rai finally returned to Lahore on November 18, 1907 after an absence of six months and nine days. There was jubilation throughout India on his release. Lahore was illuminated on the day he set foot on its soil.<sup>111</sup> And he was accorded a touching reception by the people. Addressing the students of D.A.V. College, Lahore, on November 29, 1907, Lajpat Rai said that "so long as you go to the other doors to beg, so long as you cannot stand on your own legs, you cannot succeed".<sup>112</sup> In Delhi, the students of St. Stephen's College, asked for a holiday to mark the occasion and invited Lajpat Rai to address them. When he came to Delhi on January 20, 1908, the students of the College drew his carriage to the meeting where he spoke on Swadeshi. So great was the rush that "the lecture came to an abrupt end as the meeting had to be dissolved owing to the insufficient accommodation to hold the crowd".<sup>113</sup>

On his return from Mandalay, Lajpat Rai filed a suit in the Calcutta High Court against the *Englishman* (Calcutta). The September 10, 1907, issue of the paper had held Lajpat Rai guilty of tampering with the loyalty of Punjab sepoys and had written that "The very virtues of Lajpat Rai only make him more dangerous and it is the half-religious, half-political fanatics of this half-sane, half-mad brand that are always the most dangerous conspirators." Mr. Justice Fletcher of the Calcutta High Court, who heard the case held the statement to be a malicious libel upon him and awarded him damages amounting to Rs. 15,000. Besides, the defendants had to apologise.<sup>114</sup> In a similar defamation case against the *Daily Express* (London) he was awarded £50 as damages.

"The return of Lajpat Rai in November did not reverse the tide running in favour of moderation. Although Lajpat Rai was still attracted to Tilak and extremist tactics, he knew that a defence of his former position in the face of moderate

strength might undermine his political influence. Lajpat Rai also sympathized with the moderates due to his mistaken belief that Gokhale had been instrumental in ending the deportation. Consequently he refused to be an extremist candidate for the presidency of the 1907 Congress and did not question the attacks on extremism made at an Indian Association meeting which elected Punjab delegates for the Surat session."<sup>115</sup>

From the foregoing survey Lajpat Rai emerges as a reasonable and a high-minded statesman who believed in conciliation whenever necessary and not as a sectarian extremist who wanted to score victories over his opponents. Lajpat Rai's fervent advocacy of the extremist school was aimed more at accelerating the pace of the Indian nationalist struggle than at weakening the moderates. His overriding passion, namely, freedom from British Rule was never in doubt. He subordinated everything including his political extremism to this cause.

## Notes

1. The *Panjabee*, December 11, 1905.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 110.
10. C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny* (Andhra University, Waltair, 1937), p. 55.
11. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 110.
12. Ibid.
13. *Report of the Twenty-First Indian National Congress, Benaras, 1905*, pp. 73-5.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 111.
17. "According to Lala Lajpat Rai", writes N.G. Jog, "it was at the Delhi Congress that Tilak began to think in terms of a passive resistance



campaign. The idea of passive resistance revolved in Tilak's mind for a year and it was only after the Calcutta Congress (December 1906) that he spelled it out." *Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, op. cit., p. 100.

18. *The Panjabee*, January 10, 1906. Giving expression to Lajpat Rai's views it wrote : "If the Congress persists in the present infatuated policy of disgraceful inaction and contemptible talk heedless of the demand made on them for action, the country will come to regard them as a body of ambitious imbeciles or a society of self seekers. . . . Speeches without action are demoralising. If the Congress be hopelessly wedded to impotent rhetoric and despicable pomp, the people who have been crying for action should combine and start a congress of work."

19. John Morley, *Recollections* (Macmillan Co., New York, 1917), Vol. II, p. 181.

20. See *Lala Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit., p. 182.

21. Gokhale's letter to Natesh Rao, August 9, 1906 quoted in D. B. Mathur, *Gokhale : A Political Biography* (Manaktalas Bombay, 1966), p. 340.

22. Ibid., p. 341.

23. Ibid.

24. See Dhananjay Kecer, *Lokamanya Tilak*, op. cit., p. 252. Also see N. G. Jog, *Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, op. cit., p. 86. He writes, "Tilak was inclined towards Lajpat Rai to preside at the Calcutta session, 1906."

25. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., pp. 112-13.

26. See R. P. Masani, *Dadabhai Naoroji : The Grand Old Man of India* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London 1932), p. 497.

27. Ibid., p. 495.

28. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 113.

29. Maharaja Darbhanga played an important role in the Calcutta session. See M. N. Das, *India Under Morley and Minto* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1964), p. 94.

30. Ibid.

31. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 113.

32. Quoted in M.N Das, *India Under Morley and Minto*, op. cit., p. 93.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. *The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I*, op. cit., p. 43.

36. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 113.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. See *Report of the Twenty-Second I. N. C. Calcutta*, 1906, p. 21.

40. *Lala Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit., p. 206.

41. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 114.

42. *Report of the Twenty-Second I.N.C. Calcutta 1906*, op. cit. Resolution VII read, "Having regard to the fact that the people of this country have little or no voice in its administration and that their representatives

to the Government do not receive due considerations, the Congress is of the opinion that the Boycott Movement inaugurated in Bengal by way of protest against the partition of that province, was and is legitimate."

43. Ibid. Resolution VIII read : "This Congress accords its most cordial support to the Swadeshi movement and calls upon the people of the country to labour for its success by making earnest and sustained efforts to promote the growth of indigenous industries and to stimulate the production of indigenous articles by giving them preference over imported commodities, even at some sacrifice." The words 'even at some sacrifice' were inserted on the suggestion of Tilak as a compromise.

44. *The History of the Indian National Congress*, op. cit., p. 84.

45. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 114.

46. Ibid.

47. Norman, G. Barrier, op. cit., pp. 357-8.

48. Ibid., p. 358.

49. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 115.

50. Ibid, p. 116. Also see Norman G. Barrier, "The British and Controversial Publications in Punjab", *The Panjab Past and Present*, Vol. VIII, April, 1974, p. 34.

51. Ibid., p. 117.

52. Quoted in M.N. Das, *India Under Morley and Minto*, op. cit., p. 97.

53. Ibid., *Minto Papers*, Minto to Morley, Vol. VI, Aug. 7, 1907.

54. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., pp. 121-2.

55. Ibid.

56. See *The Panjabee*, March 22, 1907. Also see *NAI Home Progress* 7590, July 1907, Appendix E. In this connection Abdul Hamid, citing *The Times* (London) 1907, has alleged that "a Hindu mob fell upon Christian missionaries and pastors. The Arya Samajist leader, Lajpat Rai, boasted that no court could convict him and that no prison would hold him". See Abdul Hamid, *Muslim Separation in India* (Oxford University Press, Lahore, 1967), p. 59.

57. Ibid. Such an agitation of the agriculturists is termed as an instance of the 'lack of caution in the Punjabi character'. See G.S. Deol, *The Role of Ghadar Party in the National Movement* (Sterling Publishers, Delhi, 1969), p. 182.

58. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., pp. 123-5.

59. Ibid., p. 124.

60. Cited in M. N. Das, *India Under Morley and Minto*, op. cit., p. 133. Also see Sri Ram Sharma, *Punjab in Ferment* (S. Chand & Co., New Delhi, 1971), p. 79.

61. Ibid., *Morley Papers*, Minto to Morley, Vol. VI, August 29, 1907.

62. *NAI Home Progress* 7590, No. 695, May 3, 1907. Lajpat Rai himself was apprehensive of the success. He wrote, "My only fear is that the bursting out may not be premature". See *The Sedition Committee 1918 Report* (Calcutta 1918), p. 143. Also see its reprint (New Age Publishers, Calcutta 1973), p. 143.

63. *NAI*. Minute of Sir Denzil Ibbetson Home Progress 7590, No. 1, April 30, 1907. Also see Arun Chandra Guha, *First Spark of Revolution* (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1971), pp. 328-2.

64. Quoted in Mary, Countess of Minto, *India : Minto and Morley* (Macmillan and Co. Ltd., London, 1934), pp. 124-5.

65. See *The Panjabee*, May 11, 1907.

66. *NAI*. Minute Home Progress 7590, April 30, 1907. Sir Denzil Ibbetson admitted that the prosecution of the *Panjabee* was a blunder and that the *Civil and Military Gazette* incited worse racial hatred. Similarly, Minto wrote to Morley on May 2, 1907, "They were disgracefully low in tone, just the sort of thing to stir up racial hatred. The Punjab Government decided not to prosecute and would not allow private prosecution. They have been right, but it makes one's blood boil to know that a leading English newspaper could publish such productions". Quoted in Mary Countess of Minto, *India : Minto and Morley*, op. cit., p. 123.

67. See Edward Thompson and G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* (Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1969, Indian Reprint), p. 580. They wrote, "In the Punjab the disturbances were less clearly political. They had their origin in definite agrarian grievances due to the Government's policy in the canal colonies which more than savoured of bad faith, while land assessment had been too drastically revised in other parts. The agitation was increased by wild suspicions connected with the spread of plague in Northern India. Riots occurred in Lahore, Rawalpindi and other towns. These may have been partly due to the activities of politicians like Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh, but it was essentially a popular movement."

68. See M. N. Das, op. cit., p. 133. *Minto Papers*, correspondence, 1907, Vol. I, No. 246 b, May 19, 1907.

69. Ibid. Also see Stephen E. Koss, *John Morley At the India Office* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1969), p. 100.

70. See S. L. Karandikar, *Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak : The Hercules and Prometheus of Modern India* (Poona, n. d.), pp. 242-3.

71. See Dhananjay Keer, op. cit., p. 266.

72. Ibid.

73. See Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, *Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics* (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1964), p. 59.

74. Quoted in Hirendranath Mukherjee, *India's Struggle for Freedom* (National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1962), p. 117.

75. See Pravrajika Atmaprana, *Sister Nivedita of Ramkrishna—Vivekanand* (Sister Nivedita Girl's School, Calcutta, 1967, Second Edition), p. 208.

76. See S. N. Balasundaram, "The National Consciousness in Tamil Nadu", in K. K. Gangadharan (ed.), *Indian National Consciousness : Growth and Development* (Kalamkar Prakashan, New Delhi, 1972), p. 73.

77. See Yusuf Mehrally, *The Price of Liberty* (The National Information and Publications Ltd., Bombay, 1948), pp. 19-30.

78. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., pp. 180-1.

79. See M.N. Das, op. cit., p. 109. Also see B. S. Nijjar, *Punjab Under the British Rule* (K. B. Publications, New Delhi, 1974), Vol. II, pp. 10-11.

80. Norman G. Barrier, op. cit., p. 360.

81. *Civil and Military Gazette*, June 11, 1907. Also see Sankar Ghose, *The Renaissance to Militant Nationalism in India* (Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1969), p. 40.

82. See M. N. Das, op. cit., p. 109.

83. *Civil and Military Gazette*, June 12, 1907.

84. See M. N. Das, op. cit., p. 109.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 110. In his letter to Dunlop Smith he denounced the revolutionaries and assured the Viceroy on behalf of the entire Hindu population, Sanatanist of course, that they all approved the deportation of Lajpat Rai, Ajit Singh, etc., and had no sympathies for them either . . ."

86. Quoted in P. C. Ghosh, *Indian National Congress* (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960), p. 192.

87. See Daniel Argov, op. cit., p. 130.

88. Lajpat Rai, *Story of My Deportation* (Punjabee Press, Lahore, 1908), pp. xvii-xviii.

89. See Stephen S. Koss, *John Morley at the India Office*, op. cit., pp. 76.

90. See Dharamvira, *Lala Har Dayal and Revolutionary Movements of His Times* (Indian Book Company, New Delhi, 1970), pp. 41-42. Also see Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist* (The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, Arizona, 1975), p. 35.

91. See M. N. Das, op. cit., p. 133. Also see Stephen E. Koss, op. cit., p. 163.

92. *Ibid.*

93. *Ibid.* p. 54.

94. See John Morley, *Recollections*, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 219.

95. Gokhale's letter dated May 22, 1907, published in *The Indian Review*, June 1907.

96. Letter of Gokhale to William Wedderburn, May 24, 1907, quoted in D. B. Mathur, *Gokhale: A Political Biography*, op. cit., p. 112.

97. *NAI*. Home Department Proceedings, August 1907, No. 3., Deposit. Printed.

98. H. W. Nevins, *The New Spirit in India* (Harper Brothers, London, 1908), pp. 303-4. He wrote "When I was at Peshawar, I ventured to ask one in authority why a man of such high reputation should have been selected for attack. In defence of the Punjab Government, he said, 'you see it was just because he was so good that they fixed him alone. If he had been a rotter, they would have left him alone'."

99. *Ibid.* Nevins contended, "It was because they hoped to strike at the Arya Samaj at the same time. The authorities in Northern India had long regarded the Samaj with special enmity. Much of the infor-

mation (against the Arya Samaj) is based on false information. . . ."

100. Ibid., pp. 295-6. "Lajpat Rai, a man of austere and generous life, one who had given up great worldly success for the service of the poor. By nature averse to politics, he devoted himself to the deep questions which lie beyond the touch of government."

101. F. A. Robertson's confidential Memorandum dated July 11, 1907, read, ". . . It was he and his influence certainly which dragged the heart and soul of the political side of the Arya Samaj." See Sri Ram Sharma, *Lajpat Rai : A History of the Arya Samaj*, op. cit., p. 174. Appendix.

102. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., pp. 180-9.

103. Ibid., p. 190.

104. See Mary, Countess of Minto, *India : Minto and Morley*, op. cit., p. 132.

105. Sri Ram Sharma, *Punjab in Ferment*, op. cit., p. 139.

106. Minto to Morley, November 5, 1907, quoted in M. N. Das, op. cit., p. 135. For the dark side of the story see Stanley Wolpert *Morley and India : 1906-1910* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p. 70. He writes: "Minto used what leisure he had for his horses and hunt, although, even if he had the time, it is highly improbable that the Viceroy would have spent it in trying to implement Morley's mere wishes concerning matters so trivial. With reference to a prisoner of the fame and popularity of Lala Lajpat Rai, for example, about whom Morley wrote at least half a dozen times to Minto appealing for rapid release, and concerning whom at least a dozen questions were asked in Parliament, indifference to Whitehall's Liberal leader, amounting to official insubordination, was the bureaucratic rule." Studying Lajpat Rai's "files" several months after his release Morley was shocked: "It seems clear from the papers that the Lieutenant-Governor of Burma refused Lajpat's request to see his solicitor. This is in itself, a hateful thing to do, only worthy of Russia, or, say Austria, in her Italian days. But worse still, I was allowed to tell the House of Commons that access to a solicitor would of course be allowed. In this, nobody in your government set me right. . . . More than that, I was permitted to say that he was allowed to receive letters from his family. It now seems that some 50 such letters were stopped, and I was never told. Now, even the officials responsible in India, must surely know that in this country, which after all, is and means to be their master, for a Minister to mislead Parliament in matters of fact, is as heinous an offence as he can commit" (J. Morley to Minto, April 15, 1908, *J. Morley Papers, Vol. III*).

107. Ibid.

108. *NAI*. Minutes of H. H. Risley, November 21, 1907, Department of Home (Pol-A) Progress 4-7, November 1907 (Confidential).

109. *Autobiography of Sir C. Sankaran Nair* (Lady Madhavan Nair, Madras, 1966), p. 396.

110. Morley to Minto, November 8, 1907, quoted in M. M. Das, op. cit., pp. 135-6.

111. *Bengal Native Newspapers Report : Bande-Mataram*, November 20, 1907.

112. *NAI*. Home Department, Political Proceedings, Part-B, D.C.I. Report, January 1908, Nos. 19-26 (Confidential).

113 See Sangat Singh, *Freedom Movement in Delhi* (Associated Publishing House, New Delhi, 1972), p. 124.

114. *NAI*. Home Department Political Proceedings, Part-B August 1909, Nos. 65-75. Suit No: 336 of 1908. Also see Algurai Shastri, *Lala Lajpat Rai* (Lok Sevak Mandal, New Delhi, 1957), pp. 260-7.

115. Norman G. Barrier, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

## CHAPTER III

### Surat Split and After

As was to be expected, the deportation brought in its wake unprecedented popularity to Lajpat Rai. It reached its climax by the end of the year 1907. The extremists proposed his name for the Presidentship of the forthcoming annual session of the Congress at Surat. Sir Surendranath Banerjea wrote to Gokhale on December 12, 1907:

I fear Tilak and his party mean mischief about the election of the President. We must avoid anything like a row. I would like to suggest your writing to Lajpat Rai requesting him to publicly dissociate himself from the movement.<sup>1</sup>

The Reception Committee was known to be greatly influenced by Pherozeshah Mehta. Therefore, Gokhale had no difficulty in getting Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh nominated for the Presidentship against the proposed candidature of Lajpat Rai.<sup>2</sup> Lajpat Rai naturally "refused to be drawn into the battle, and absolutely declined to be elected President in so irregular a fashion".<sup>3</sup> Tilak felt sorry over Lajpat Rai's exit from the contest, engineered by Gokhale's party.<sup>4</sup> He still felt that Lajpat Rai was a much more deserving candidate than Rash Behari Ghosh in terms of "sacrifice, sufferings and hardship for the nation's cause".<sup>5</sup> Even Aurobindo did not like Lajpat Rai's staying away from the contest.<sup>6</sup>

Lajpat Rai reached Bombay to attend the Surat Congress. Tilak received him there and then both went to Surat. There Lajpat Rai was accorded a hero's welcome by the Nationalists.<sup>7</sup> N.G. Jog writes that the reception accorded to Lala Lajpat Rai

at Surat, paled the reception given to the official President-elect of the Congress into insignificance.<sup>8</sup>

The Extremists attended the first Indian Nationalist Conference held in Haripur near Surat on December 23, 1907. The Conference which was presided over by Aurobindo Ghose passed resolutions on total boycott and complete independence as opposed to the Moderates' demand for dominion status. But Aurobindo's voice was not fully representative of the Nationalists. Among the Nationalists, Tilak and Lajpat Rai, unlike Aurobindo Ghose, did not want any split in the Congress.<sup>9</sup> But the Moderates had anticipated the split well in advance. The undelivered presidential address of Rash Behari Ghosh stands as a testimony to it.<sup>10</sup> His address also contained an unwarranted and uncharitable reference to Lajpat Rai.<sup>11</sup> Further, the Moderates were set on undoing the work of the Extremists on the resolutions of Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education passed during the previous session of the Congress.

Then followed the famous rift between the Moderates and the Extremists. The battle of wits and, to some extent, of physical strength, turned the Surat session of the Congress into a fiasco. The 26th and 27th of December, 1907 settled the split as an established fact. The outcome was the banishment of the Extremists from the Congress. Lajpat Rai tried his best to bring a rapprochement but the parties did not budge an inch from their respective positions. In his presidential address of the All India Swadeshi Conference at Surat, he forewarned both in these words:

I would beg of my Moderate friends not to play into the hands of the enemies, as to do so will be, in the words of Hon'ble Gokhale, to make confusion worse confounded. It may be that some of the so-called Extremist methods are not to their liking, but for that reason to give them up to the enemy and to force them or hold them up to the ridicule of the Anglo-Indians will not be wisdom.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, addressing the Extremists, he said, "To my Extremist friends I would respectfully appeal not to be impatient of the slowness of age and the voice of practical experience."<sup>13</sup>



These appeals of Lajpat Rai vindicate his loyalty to the larger good of the nationalist movement. He was equally solicitous for both the sections. Indeed, his counsel of caution to the Extremists was even more important and it should dispel the common notion that he had totally identified himself with the Extremists in the Congress.

On December 27, the Moderates decided to hold a National Convention at Sir Pherozezshah Mehta's residence at Surat. The purpose of the Convention which was held the following day was "to resuscitate the work of twenty-three years' efforts of the Indian National Congress".<sup>14</sup> To the surprise of many Lajpat Rai attended this National Convention.<sup>15</sup> And it would be worthwhile examining his attitude to it.

The National Convention passed the following resolutions:

- (1) The attainment by India of self-government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire and participation by her in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with those members is the goal of our political aspirations.
- (2) The advance towards this goal is to be by strictly constitutional means, by bringing about a steady reform of the existing system of administration, by promoting national unity and fostering public spirit, and by improving the condition of the mass of the people.
- (3) All meetings held for the promotion of the aims and objects above indicated must be conducted in an orderly manner with due submission to the authority of those entrusted with the power to control their procedure.<sup>16</sup>

Supporting the main resolution Lajpat Rai said:

I beg to associate myself with the proposal which has been placed before you. I wish it had not been necessary for me to associate myself with the proposal today had we gone on with our proceedings in the ordinary manner. But as misfortune will have it that was not destined to be, and today we, at any rate, express the desire that notwithstanding all our misfortunes We are determined to continue

work. (Loud applause) we are, therefore, going to prove to the world that with all our internal quarrels we have agreed to serve the country by helping the Congress under whose banner we have been battling for the last twenty-two years (Cheers)<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, the Extremists met in a separate camp under the Presidentship of Aurobindo Ghose and expressed their firm faith in the resolutions of the 1906 Congress on Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education and self-government.<sup>18</sup> They also published their version of the Surat Split on December 31, 1907.<sup>19</sup> They accused the Moderates in general and Gokhale in particular for the Surat fiasco. Against Gokhale their charge was that he obtained the nomination of Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh, "brushing aside the proposal for the nomination of Lala Lajpat Rai". They also accused him of not supplying "a copy of the Draft Resolution to any delegate, till 2.30 p.m. on Thursday, the 26th December". The last allegation against Gokhale was that the goal of "Swaraj", which had been accepted at the Calcutta Congress under the Presidentship of Dadabhai Naoroji was ignored during the 1907 session.<sup>20</sup>

Gokhale however denied these charges. He said that Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh was favoured by an "overwhelming preponderance of public opinion in the Reception Committee at Surat". About his opposition to Lajpat Rai's candidature for the Congress Presidentship he said that the strength of the Extremists was "only five or six out of about two hundred" and therefore, "the rejection of Lala Lajpat Rai's name would only be a painful and wanton humiliation for him".<sup>21</sup> Further explaining his opposition, Gokhale said that:

though Lala Lajpat Rai had been personally restored to freedom, the larger question of principle involved in his deportation had yet to be fought out, and it would best be fought out by keeping up the feeling of the country united and intact behind him, and that this feeling was sure to be divided if one section of the Congress tried to run him as a party candidate.<sup>22</sup>

Gokhale put the blame for the untoward happenings at Surat on Tilak. It was Tilak, he said, who first opposed the

change of venue from Nagpur to Surat then "played his second card" by agitating for Lajpat Rai's election to Presidentship "to have the election of Dr. Ghosh set aside". According to Gokhale, Tilak was "foiled by Lala Lajpat Rai's own letter which put an effective extinguisher on the agitation".<sup>23</sup>

In retrospect, Lajpat Rai vehemently criticised the happenings at Surat in 1907. He was of the opinion that had Tilak been more discrete things could have been different. He persuaded Tilak twice, during the Congress session at Surat, not to oppose Rash Behari Ghosh's candidature. Tilak first agreed to it but later changed his mind. Keshavmurti, on the authority of Aurobindo, writes, "...Lajpat Rai came to Tilak and informed him that the government had decided, if the Congress split, to crush the extremists by the most ruthless repression. Tilak thought, and the events proved that he was right. . . ." <sup>24</sup> Lajpat Rai was also critical of the other party. He felt that with resourcefulness and restraint the Moderates could have averted the untoward incidents at Surat. But the stand of the Moderates only accentuated the differences that led to a split.<sup>25</sup>

Gokhale was perhaps being unduly harsh to Tilak. The schism in the Congress was not Tilak's creation. He actually felt sorry over it. To him the Surat imbroglio was "accidental and unexpected".<sup>26</sup> Much of the controversy about Surat can be laid to rest if one considers what Aurobindo Ghose has to say on the subject: "Very few people know that it was I (without consulting Tilak), who gave the order that led to the breaking of the Congress."<sup>27</sup> The Surat split could legitimately be attributed to the conflict between the Moderates and the Extremists, but to make Tilak solely responsible for it would hardly be warranted by the facts.

Personally Lajpat Rai was in favour of the two factions being reconciled. To his mind, the Moderates could assume the actual control and management of the Congress without excluding the Extremists who could remain within the Congress fold as a strong minority. But his well-intentioned attempts to bring about a reunion were repulsed. So he had to abandon his plan for a reconciliation. But he wrote: "To a man of my humble understanding it means that the moderate 'Nationalists' are committing an error of tactics in making the split a 'settled fact'."<sup>28</sup>

The Moderates, National Convention at Surat appointed a Committee to revise the constitution for the Congress. This committee was to meet at Allahabad. Meanwhile Gokhale waited on the Viceroy on January 15, 1908 and told Dunlop Smith of his own failure to reconcile the two parties in the Congress. But Dunlop Smith gathered from Gokhale's talks that he "really welcomed the Surat fiasco as it cleared the air".<sup>29</sup>

The Convention Committee met in Allahabad on April 18 and 19, 1908 and discussed the draft of a new creed for the Congress. Lajpat Rai was opposed to the creed<sup>30</sup> because it left no place for those who believed in complete independence of the country. Lajpat Rai later said: "I thought that none of us had the right to exclude from the deliberations of the Congress anybody who pitched his ideal so high as the complete independence of his mother country."<sup>31</sup> He went on to say:

One chief point for consideration before me was that no assembly in India could be called national which precluded by virtue of this creed a man of purity and of the absolute disinterestedness and high patriotism of the nation as Aurobindo Ghose. . . . However, at that time the public opinion of the country was not in favour of going so far and therefore the creed was passed and adopted.<sup>32</sup>

In spite of the bitterness and recrimination generated by the split Lajpat Rai continued to have high regards for Gokhale, though his sympathies were with the Extremists. A great stickler for truth, he refuted the charges levelled against Gokhale by the Extremists for his share in the transportation of Tilak which came about in 1908. On matters of policy, however, Lajpat Rai did not spare either Gokhale or his party. In his opinion the Moderates had committed a blunder by leaving the Extremists alone to be callously treated by the British authorities. He said:

But all the same it cannot be denied that the split of 1907 and the persistent refusal of the Moderates to make up, have materially contributed to the extinction of the so-called 'Extremists'.<sup>33</sup>

The Government had already started a policy of repression on the Extremists. In July 1908, Tilak was transported for six years. Bipin Chandra Pal was imprisoned in October 1908 and Aurobindo Ghose was under detention from May 1908 to May 1909. Reviewing these developments Lajpat Rai stated:

So far as political foresight is concerned, I may not be worthy of even loosening the latches of the shoes of the Moderate leaders but I am emphatically of opinion that the extinction of the extreme left wing of the Indian National Party is a grave menace to the Congress itself. The Moderate leaders may discover it when it is too late.<sup>34</sup>

Further, Lajpat Rai doubted whether the Congress could claim to be a national party under the sole leadership of the Moderates and he said that they were not justified "to sail under the name of the 'Indian National Congress' without the Extremists".<sup>35</sup>

At about this time there was a hint of a major change in the national scene. Muslim leaders had met Lord Minto and had secured from him acceptance of the principle of separate electorate and of excessive representation on the grounds of the political importance of their community. The British policy seemed heavily tilted in favour of the Muslims. This together with the establishment of All India Muslim League caused a great deal of concern among the Hindus. Norman G. Barrier writes:

... a leading Arya lawyer, Ram Bhaj Datta, suggested that the Hindu Sahaik *Sabhas*, Hindu cultural organizations, begun in 1906 to promote 'brotherly feelings among' the divergent Hindu sects be transformed into political organizations which would rally Aryas and Hindus against Muslim militancy and British 'favouritism'. Continued concern over British policy toward Muslims and the creation of an anti-Hindu Muslim League, finally led to the acceptance of Ram Bhaj Datta's proposal in the spring of 1908. Fresh discussion of the reforms and the appointment of Shah Din to the Punjab Chief Court instead of a more senior Hindu Judge, Lajpat Rai wrote to Gokhale (on June

3, 1908), convinced Hindus that they must organize to protect their interests. The formation and rapid spread of the Punjab Muslim League reinforced this tendency. Muslims had formed the new League in December of 1907 to put pressure upon the Government for special grants and additional seats in the legislative council. Punjabi Hindus believed that they must organize systematically as a counterpoise to the Muslim associations.<sup>36</sup>

As early as in 1901, Lajpat Rai had pressed the necessity of a Hindu political or semi-political conference being organised, and as a result of the growing consciousness amongst the leading Hindus of the Punjab, the Punjab Provincial Hindu Sabha came into existence in 1907.<sup>37</sup> This Sabha which had branches throughout the Punjab moved into the political arena and became the spokesman for Punjabi Hindus.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, Hindu Sabhas were formed throughout the province during 1908-1909.<sup>39</sup>

Lajpat Rai believed that the Congress was overlooking the Hindu interests. His own province, Punjab where the Hindus were in a minority, had good reason to feel unhappy about these Reform measures which were to give undue representation to the Muslims in the Legislative Councils.<sup>40</sup> He was opposed to the policy of separate electorates, though he was cautious in his criticism as he did not wish to bring the process of reforms to a halt.<sup>41</sup> About the promise of separate electorates to Muslims, Lajpat Rai wrote,

That the present reforms are not based on the democratic ideal of the West may be true; but the reason for the enthusiastic reception in India is that they are believed to be a step towards an actual democratic form of government, with no distinction of Hindu, Mohammedan, Parsi, and the rest. That is the goal of the Hindu politician: he does not seek a Hindu majority crushing Mohammedan or other minorities. Aiming then to obliterate all religious distinctions for national political purposes, he objects to communal representation or communal voting which would accentuate those distinctions.<sup>42</sup>

In the following years, Lajpat Rai gradually withdrew from the Congress politics, and devoted his energies to the cause of the famine relief, upliftment of the depressed classes and other social services: During the famine in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh in 1907-8, he once again organised relief work without taking help from the government. His People's Famine Relief Movement did notable work among the famine-stricken people of all classes and all communities. It was financed by Indian merchants in the country and abroad. To Lajpat Rai, the famine work was a lesson in self-help without dependence on the Government.<sup>43</sup> His Arya Samajist emissaries distributed "money in the wholesale way" among all the famine-stricken people.<sup>44</sup> Workers of the Servants of India Society including Gopal Krishna Deodhar, Private Secretary to Gokhale, received their training in famine relief work under Lajpat Rai.<sup>45</sup>

But the government grew suspicious of Lajpat Rai's famine relief operations. The bureaucracy feared that Lajpat Rai and his Arya Samajist workers might be "using the contributions, received for the famine relief, for political activities".<sup>46</sup> These doubts were baseless however. The funds were never diverted for any political mission. The Government entertained these rumours merely to tarnish the popular image of Lajpat Rai. The following instructions issued to his co-workers by Lajpat Rai, as General Secretary, Arya Samaj Famine Relief Committee, substantiate the philanthropic nature of his mission:

- '1. Volunteers are requested to note that the work of the Relief Committee is purely philanthropic and that they should not carry on any religious and political propaganda along with it.
2. Volunteers are required not to interfere in any way with official relief work.
3. The principal work of the volunteers is to relieve orphans, destitute children, and widows, but they are authorised to use their discretion in extending relief to other persons who may be in extreme distress.
4. No orphans or children are to be removed from any district without the permission of a Magistrate, but children can be collected at any place within the district

and there properly fed and otherwise looked after.

5. Volunteers are requested to keep detailed accounts of all sums expended and to send these, together with a report of the work done, to the undersigned (Lajpat Rai) once a week.
6. Where no local committees have been appointed and local gentlemen have been requested to guide the relief work the volunteers should take instructions from them and should carry on their work under their guidance.<sup>47</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Government's attitude to him was conspicuously hostile. He was constantly being shadowed by C.I.D. Officers. Finding himself in an uncongenial political atmosphere, he left for England. Another reason for his trip to England was that he wanted to avoid the Congress session at Lahore in December 1909. He did not approve of the venue. In view of the Reform proposals for separate electorates, the Hindu population was feeling agitated in the Punjab. The Muslims too did not favour Lahore as the venue. But his advice went unheeded and he sailed for England.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, he had become disillusioned with both the Moderates and the Extremists. Besides, Lala Harkishanlal's machinations in the Punjab Congress had made his position unenviable.<sup>49</sup>

In England Lajpat Rai met Gokhale and then both had an interview with Wilfrid Scawen Blunt on October 22, 1908 at the instance of Nevinson. Surprisingly Blunt formed a very poor opinion of both of them. In his *Diaries* he was particularly harsh on Lajpat Rai:

It was difficult to see in him anything that the Indian Government could possibly have been afraid of, or that Morley can have thought it necessary to arrest by a *lettre de cachet* and deport him without trial as a danger to India.<sup>50</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru, in his *Autobiography* takes note of this adverse estimate by Blunt and tries to put the record straight. Blunt, he says: "is very hard on both, considering them far too cautious and afraid of facing realities. And yet Lalaji faced



them far more than most Indian leaders.”<sup>51</sup> Even R.C. Majumdar wrote:

. . . Blunt was not conversant with the antecedents of Lalaji, who was clever enough to assume the guise of a lamb, though he was really a lion. J.M. Chatterjee in his brief autobiographical memoir states that Lala Lajpat Rai helped their Secret Society a great deal.<sup>52</sup>

### Return from England

After his return from England Lajpat Rai resumed his legal practice. He was forced to shun all political activities from 1908 to 1912 under the pressure of circumstances. With his Extremist friends in confinement, his enthusiasm suffered a set-back. The Government was carefully watching his activities.<sup>53</sup> So he had no choice but to divert his activities from politics to the social sphere. He devoted his time, among other things, to the amelioration of the lot of the untouchables. He criticised the rigidity of the Hindu Caste system<sup>54</sup> and gave a call for the removal of the stigma of untouchability, a call that anticipated Gandhi's epoch-making campaign against the evil.

You dare not be uncivil or unkind to Mohammedans or Christians because they can make matters unpleasant for you, but you are insolent towards your own people, whom you think you can defy without any fear of retaliation.<sup>55</sup>

In March 1913, Lajpat Rai presided over the Depressed Classes Conference at Gurukul Kangri. In the course of his speech he warned his countrymen that “As long as we have these large classes of the untouchables in this country, we can make no appreciable progress in our national affairs.”<sup>56</sup>

This aspect of Lajpat Rai's activities is particularly noteworthy as an evidence of his passion for social justice among the Hindus. He did not spare the high caste Hindus for tolerating untouchability.

In 1912 Lajpat Rai visited the families of *doms* (the lowest of the untouchables) in the United Provinces with a team of the Arya Samajists, dined with them, drank their water and admitted them to the Arya Samaj.<sup>57</sup> This was an important landmark

in the social history of Arya Samaj. And, Lajpat Rai once again proved himself to be an ardent social reformer.

In order to educate the Hindu children and promote the use of Hindi as against Urdu, Lajpat Rai established in 1911 the Hindu Elementary Education League. He vigorously advocated the idea that Hindi alone deserved to be the national language of India.<sup>58</sup> Regarding the scheme of setting up the Banaras Hindu University and Lord Hardinge's earlier procrastination in the matter Lala Lajpat Rai, in 1911, emphatically said: "charter or no charter, Hindu University must exist".<sup>59</sup> In the same year he was elected to the Lahore Municipal Committee. The Punjab Government's intelligence report said that Lajpat Rai was "trying to regain the influence he lost after the disclosures in Bhai Parmanand's case regarding Lajpat Rai's involvement in the Lahore-Delhi Conspiracy case and his prompt withdrawal to England thereafter."<sup>60</sup>

### Back to Politics

The twenty-seventh session of the Congress at Bankipur (Patna) in 1912 saw the revival of Lajpat Rai's interest in the Congress politics. There he made a memorable speech in Hindustani in support of the cause of Indian settlers in South Africa. "Lajpat Rai", wrote C.Y. Chintamani, "... aroused the passion of the people with such intensity by a speech the most masculine that I thought at the time that if any South African White were anywhere within the striking distance his life would not be safe."<sup>61</sup> He compared his eloquence with that of Lloyd George, which is high praise indeed.<sup>62</sup>

In the Karachi Congress in December 1913 where the South African question again came up for discussion, Lajpat Rai pointed out that Indians lacked the right to equality in South Africa as well as in their own country.<sup>63</sup> The Karachi Congress decided to send a deputation of the Congress leaders to England to acquaint the people there with many current issues together with the depressed position of the Indians in South Africa. Lajpat Rai joined the delegation along with Bhupendra Nath Basu, M.A. Jinnah, N.M. Samarth, Maulvi Mazur-ul-Haq, S. Sinha and B.N. Sharma. He reached London in May 1914.<sup>64</sup>

As a matter of fact Lajpat Rai had left India in a panic in April, 1914. He was extremely worried about his position *vis-a-vis* the main accused in Lahore-Delhi conspiracy cases, viz., Balraj, Balmukund and Amir Chand. The Government suspected their involvement in throwing a bomb on Lord Hardinge in December 1911. Of the accused, Balraj was Lala Hansraj's son and Balmukund happened to be Bhai Parmanand's brother. The former was a friend of Lajpat Rai's late son Pyare Krishna. Balmukund lived with Lajpat Rai and did the social work organized by the latter. He got involved in the revolutionary activities and was later sentenced to death by the court.<sup>65</sup> Lajpat Rai wrote:

I loved Balraj and Balmukund the accused in the Delhi conspiracy case, and I respected Amir Chand another accused, and although I thoroughly disapproved of the action which they were charged with, I was sincerely anxious to help them. I could not do this as, (i) I was myself suspected and was being watched by the police, (ii) because any help given by me was likely to prejudice the defence. Then I began to suspect that I was being spied on by my own servant who lived with me in the same compound. Life became intolerable so I decided to leave India as soon as the preliminary inquiry before the magistrate was finished. The day I received the news that the inquiry was finished, I wired to Bombay and left Lahore to reach England as soon as possible to join the Indian delegation there.<sup>66</sup>

### Declines the Presidency

For the twenty-ninth session of the Congress to be held in Madras in December, 1914, Lajpat Rai's name was again proposed for the Presidency. Five out of the nine Provincial Congress Committees voted in his favour. The candidature was to be finalised by the Reception Committee.<sup>67</sup> When Lajpat Rai was informed of this in England, he examined the pros and cons of the offer. Since the circumstances were not entirely in his favour, he could not easily make up his mind. He first analysed the reasons for accepting the offer.

Why I should accept the office—

- “(a) Because it is the highest honour which Indians can bestow on any of their public men. It secures the person, so honoured, a definite place in the political history of the country and thereby a niche in the statuary of fame.
- “(b) Because it gives a splendid opportunity of making a weighty pronouncement on the political situation of the country which will be sure to receive attention not only in India but outside of India as well.
- “(c) Because it will enable me to enforce my ideas about the conduct of business in these assemblies. I have often expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which business is conducted at present and here is an opportunity of introducing new spirit into the proceedings which must hereafter become a permanent feature thereof.
- “(d) Because it might induce Mr. Tilak’s party to rejoin the Congress and thus unite the two wings of the Nationalist Party in India.
- “(e) Because by declining the offer I shall be placing my friends and supporters in the different committees who have recommended me for the office in a false position. I shall be slighting their wishes and causing bitter disappointment to them.”<sup>68</sup>

These reflections of his on the highest office in the Congress were as instructive as they were revealing. But the reasons which made him decline the office were even more significant. He frankly remarked that there was no basic change in his political inclinations.

My political opinions remain substantially the same as they were before my deportation. I am still of opinion that the Congress should be run in the interest of the political education of the people and not for obtaining political concessions from the Government.<sup>69</sup>

Lajpat Rai was very much disappointed by the unmanly behaviour of the Congress leadership of the time. In contrast to

the uncompromising character of the old Congress leaders the leadership of the day was swayed by the fear of the Government on the one hand and the fear of the minorities on the other.<sup>70</sup> High principles and noble politics had given way to expediency and diplomacy. The Congress, he observed, was turning into a seat-catching organization. Looking for a berth in the Legislative or Executive Councils could do considerable damage to the movement for self-government for these tendencies among the leaders ran counter to the requirements of the struggle. "The Congress", he felt, "should not be made a stepping stone to entry into the council chamber".<sup>71</sup>

Still another reason for his not accepting the office was his stand on the compulsory disarmament of Indians. Lajpat Rai did not subscribe to forced disarmament (or non-armament) of Indians. And he was not sure if his colleagues in the Congress shared his views on this matter. The beginning of the First World War taught him that only those people could defend their liberties and their countries who had arms in hand. He deprecated the position of Indian soldiers fighting as mercenaries.<sup>72</sup> He wrote:

People may be proud of a disarmed loyalty, of a loyalty of helplessness, of a loyalty of necessity, but I am not. I feel so strongly on the point that I cannot compose a presidential address without giving full expression to my feelings in this matter in rather strong language. I am not sure if the leading congressmen of Madras would like it.<sup>73</sup>

Thus Lajpat Rai turned down the proposal of Presidentship of the Congress. Meanwhile, leaders like Dinshaw Wacha, Subramanya Iyer, G.A. Natesan, Nawab Syed Muhammed, Fazlul Haque expressed themselves against Lajpat Rai. They held that since Lajpat Rai was a *persona non grata* with the Government and with the Muslims, his election to the Presidentship was undesirable.<sup>74</sup> Some of the Muslim Congressmen even threatened not to attend the session if Lajpat Rai become the President.<sup>75</sup> The matter ended with the election of Bhupendra Nath Basu instead of Lajpat Rai.

At the outbreak of the War, the Congress deputation in England, along with other prominent Indians, submitted a letter to

the Secretary of State for India,<sup>76</sup> assuring that "the Princes and people of India will readily and willingly cooperate to the best of their ability and afford opportunities of securing that end by placing the resources of their country at His Majesty's disposal for a speedy victory for the Empire."<sup>77</sup> Lajpat Rai too signed this letter and commented that "It is an occasion for proving that British rule in India does not rest on the British sword but on British principles."<sup>78</sup> But he was not happy over it. He "did not believe in an unconditional support to Britain in the war".<sup>79</sup>

The outbreak of War changed Lajpat Rai's programme. Instead of returning to India, he remained in London and started writing his book, *The Arya Samaj*<sup>80</sup> and contributed articles to the press on Indian affairs. In one of the articles he wrote: "India has enriched England in almost every department of life, in wealth, in industries, in administrative experience, in military skill, in scientific research, and last but not the least in the art of Government."<sup>81</sup> In an interview to the *Christian Commonwealth* of July 29, 1914, repudiating the India Council Bill, Lajpat Rai said that refusal to even "that small concession of representation in the bill will make the progress of our constitutional agitation very difficult".<sup>82</sup> In November 1914, he left for the United States accompanied by his friend Shiv Prasad Gupta of Banaras.<sup>83</sup>

### In America and Japan

In New York, Lajpat Rai started writing his autobiography. In the introduction to *The Story of My Life* he wrote on November 28, 1914 :

Some friends think we shall achieve success and win India's freedom very soon. I regret I cannot share that optimism. In my opinion the struggle will be protracted one. We have but few friends and those are not powerful; our foe on the other hand is mighty. We are yet without the resources that bestow success on national movements.<sup>84</sup>

Lajpat Rai was quite appreciative of the activities of the terrorists who sacrificed their lives for the political freedom of the

country.<sup>85</sup> But he regretted that the secret societies lacked the support of the rich. Their revolutionary acts were in fact commonly regarded as "sheer madness". The intelligentsia, he thought, was self-centred and timid. They craved for liberty but without having to make sacrifices. He believed that the education they received made them unsuitable for sacrifices. He even went to the length of saying that "I feel if the British declared today that they would quit the country in a week's time ninety per cent of this class would send petitions begging of them not to forsake them."<sup>86</sup> Lajpat Rai believed that there were very few people among Indians who could sacrifice their lives and wealth for the liberation of their country. The masses were still not politically awakened to a degree required for national freedom. He stood for the Extremist Party and remarked:

There are those who blame the Extremist party for having injured the cause by making the British rulers alert and by forcing them by their impatience, their extremism, their madness, to adopt a policy of repression. These people forget that under foreign rule peace unalloyed by repression would be fatal. The political consciousness created by the Extremists in a decade could not have been created by the Moderates in half a century. . . . For a subject nation nothing is more fatal than peace.<sup>87</sup>

In America, Lajpat Rai met Indian revolutionaries who were working to liberate India with the support of German arms and money. In November, 1914 a reception was arranged in his honour by the Hindustani Association of Indian students and citizens at New York with the efforts of Chandra Kant Chakravarty and Heramba Lal Gupta—members of the Ghadar Party. Chakravarty presided over the function and made an anti-British and pro-German speech.<sup>88</sup> But Lajpat Rai disagreed with him:

I am an Indian patriot and I wish freedom of my country. I have no sympathy with the Germans nor I have anything against them. Considering our present circumstances we will gather along in the British Empire as a self-governing

race of the latter, than go and be governed by another nation.<sup>89</sup>

Many Indians met Lajpat Rai individually and wanted to know his views on India's participation in the War. To them he said that—

although I was not Pro-British in my sympathies and did not wish for their victory, I had no faith in the Germans and did not believe in the deliverance of India with their help or through their agency. I have been always rather fanatically attached to the theory that liberty won with foreign help was not worth having.<sup>90</sup>

On another occasion Lajpat Rai was told by Barakatullah, a member of the Ghadar Party, that a rebellion was imminent in India and that it would be backed up by the Amir of Kabul. He asked Lajpat Rai to cooperate with the rebels without fear, since India would be free in three months' time. But he disregarded Barakatullah's request and told him that he neither favoured the rule of the Amir nor of the Germans in India.<sup>91</sup> Clearly, he thought little of the freedom gained through foreign assistance.<sup>92</sup>

During his stay in New York from November 1914 to February 1915 he met a number of prominent people, including Burk Cochrane, Prof. Kenes, Merzer Prof. Seligman,<sup>93</sup> Walter Lippman, Keir Hardie Jr. He also came in contact with the Irish freedom fighter De Valera.<sup>94</sup> When Lajpat Rai was about to leave New York for Washington, Heramba Lal Gupta sought his support for revolutionary work. Lajpat Rai later wrote: "He gave me to understand that he was in the confidence of the German Government and wanted to know if I would cooperate with them. My reply was in the negative."<sup>95</sup>

At Chicago and Los Angeles, Heramba Lal Gupta again met Lajpat Rai and pressed him to join the Indo-German organisation. The Germans, he told him, were eager to have him with them and were prepared to follow his advice on his own terms. But Lajpat Rai categorically refused the offer. He recounted Heramba Lal Gupta's last attempt to win him over at Los Angeles in these words:



He wanted me to sign a proclamation of independence which they wanted to issue and with which they proposed to incite the Indian soldiers that were fighting in Flanders to rebel. Once more he offered me the leadership of the whole organisation and told me that the German Leaders had issued special instructions to their consulates to try to win me over and that they would do anything I would want them to do.<sup>96</sup>

At San Francisco, in April 1915, Ram Chandra, leader of the Ghadar Party met Lajpat Rai very often and had prolonged discussions with him. He told him of the German plans about India but Lajpat Rai as usual doubted their success. According to Lajpat Rai's own report—

The most important thing he told me was about a prospected cargo of arms and ammunitions which was to be landed somewhere near Karachee. He said, he had told them that hundreds and thousands of Indians would be there to receive arms and start a revolution at once. He was afraid lest there may be nobody to receive arms and he might be discredited in the eyes of the Germans. I took him very severely to task for having practised deception upon his employers as he could not be acquainted with the fact that outside the ranks of the army, the whole of Punjab and Karachee could not produce even 5000 men who had ever seen a rifle, much less a machine gun. He admitted this and justified his conduct on the ground that was the only way to get German help.<sup>97</sup>

Meanwhile, Lajpat Rai had completed his *Young India*<sup>98</sup> and was planning a trip to Japan in July 1915.

In India, Mrs. Annie Besant suggested in a press statement Lala Lajpat Rai's name for the Presidentship of the Bombay Congress session to be held in December 1915. Pheroza Shah Mehta as the Chairman of the Reception Committee tactfully avoided meeting Mrs. Besant because he favoured the election of Sir Satyendra Sinha instead.<sup>99</sup>

In Japan, Lajpat Rai was again approached by Heramba Lal Gupta. Rash Behari Bose also met him a number of times.

Both Gupta and Bose were working for the Indian revolution in Japan. Lajpat Rai had a very high opinion of Rash Behari Bose.<sup>100</sup> Gupta again sought Lajpat Rai's advice on carrying on anti-British propaganda in Japan. To this, Lajpat Rai said that he would neither give himself to be a revolutionary nor would desire separation from the British Empire."<sup>101</sup>

During his tour, Lajpat Rai made many valuable contacts. The leading pressmen, university professors, parliamentarians, cabinet ministers and the Premier of Japan, Count Okuma, were among his acquaintances. He once presided over the banquet given in the honour of the Emperor of Japan, on his coronation, in November 1915.<sup>102</sup> This popularity helped him in securing the safety of Rash Behari Bose and Heramba Lal Gupta. But Lajpat Rai himself did not stay long in that country because of the feeling of uncertainty caused by the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Although, the Premier of Japan assured him of his safety,<sup>103</sup> he returned to San Francisco on December 27, 1915.

Lajpat Rai attended a meeting of Indian students in New York in December, 1915, in which his speech was interpreted by the Chairman, Ram Chandra, as giving an indication of his sympathy with the Ghadar movement. Lajpat Rai strongly protested against his having been misrepresented by Ram Chandra.<sup>104</sup> After this, he shunned all engagement and devoted his time to "revising the manuscript of *Young India* in the light of criticism that had been made on it by Harold Laski at the request of B.W. Huebsch . . . "<sup>105</sup>

In 1916, Chandra Chakravarty replaced Ram Chandra, as head of the Ghadar Party in America. On his return from Germany, Chandra Chakravarty twice persuaded Lajpat Rai to go to that country but Lajpat Rai totally refused.<sup>106</sup>

In the meantime, M.N. Roy arrived in California. When Lajpat Rai came to know of M.N. Roy and his marriage with an American girl, he extended his help to both of them.<sup>107</sup> In his Memoirs Roy acknowledges the financial assistance<sup>108</sup> he received from Lajpat Rai but oddly enough he classes him with the pro-German Indian revolutionaries in U.S.A.

Lala Lajpat Rai was in New York when I came there in Autumn 1916. He had come to America on a propaganda

tour the year before, and with his oratory won the sympathy of liberal minded men for the cause of Indian Independence . . . Like all colonial nationalists, he was of course pro-German but he was too cautious a man to be actively connected with any clandestine arrangements.<sup>109</sup>

Of all the Bengali revolutionaries Lajpat Rai met in America, M.N. Roy was the one he had a genuine respect for.<sup>110</sup> He found most of the Bengali revolutionaries as "unprincipled both in the conduct of their campaign and in the obtaining and spending of funds." On the whole his experience with the revolutionaries in the United States was "sad and disappointing".<sup>111</sup>

"Here it is worth mentioning that Dr. N S. Hardikar of the Hindustani Seva Dal fame was a disciple of Lajpat Rai whom he regarded as his political guru. He served Lajpat Rai for nearly forty months, between 1916 and 1919, during his stay in America, Dr. Hardikar has given a graphic account of "Lala Lajpat Rai in America". He recalls that Lajpat Rai established the Indian Home Rule League of America on 22nd October, 1917 with himself as President, J. T. Sunderland as Vice-President, Hardikar as General Secretary and K.D. Shastri as Organising Secretary. The Objects of the League were defined as follows:

- (1) To support the Home Rule Movement in India by cooperating with such political organisations as Home Rule Leagues in India, Muslim League and Indian National Congress,
- (2) To secure the power of self-determination for India through constitutional methods,
- (3) To further all kinds of friendly intercourse—social, cultural, educational and commercial—between India and America,
- (4) To supply authentic information on the vital problems of modern India to the American people by the publication of a monthly magazine or by such other methods as are deemed proper by the Council of the League.<sup>112</sup>

The League started a monthly *Young India*<sup>113</sup> in January 1918, and the way it advocated India's cause in the U.S.A., earned

the sincere praise of Senators A. J. Gronna and Noris.<sup>114</sup> In 1919 Lajpat Rai established the Indian Information Bureau of New York and became its first Director. This organisation served as a medium of publicity for India's cause.<sup>115</sup> His pronounced dislike for German militarism won him friends among the Americans. Under the impact of his personality Senator France of Maryland opposed the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles on the grounds that it sought to perpetuate the British rule in India.<sup>116</sup> By May 1919, the Indian Home Rule League had established its branches even in distant towns like Ann Arbor, Berkeley, Chicago, Cleveland, Louisville and Minneapolis, Columbia, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Philadelphia.<sup>117</sup> The League also formed the Hindustan Students Association and the Hindu (Indian) Workers Union of America.<sup>118</sup> Gradually, the working classes in America started giving considerable support to Indian agitation in the U.S.A. The Labour Convention that met at St. Louis and Illinois in 1917 endorsed the Indian Home Rule League's demands whole heartedly. The Fabian Club of Chicago too gave its moral support to the League.<sup>119</sup>

During his stay in America Lajpat Rai wrote *England's Debt to India*, *Political Future of India*, and *Problem of National Education in India*. He also wrote *Open Letters to Lloyd George and Edwin Montagu*.<sup>120</sup> He closely studied the organisation of many educational institutions. One of these was the New York Rand School of Sociology. This institution was run on lines of self-help. Lecturers were paid small honoraria from the fees collected. There was a small endowment fund, the income from which was utilised for house rent and other miscellaneous charges. The school imparted education in social sciences to lower class people who could not pay large sums of fees. It was on the pattern of this institution that Lajpat Rai later founded Tilak School of Politics in India in December 1920.<sup>121</sup>

Lajpat Rai's naming the School of Politics after Tilak was not just a matter of chance. The two had done many things together for the country's freedom. And there was a great deal of mutual respect and understanding. An example of this was the financial help Tilak gave to Lajpat Rai during the

latter's political activities in America. The incident narrated by Dr. Hardikar is retold by K. Sampathagiri Rao in these words:

Hardikar used to write regularly to his brother Laxman Rao in Poona, and give an account of his own activity to him. In one such letter he had written about the hardship Lalaji was undergoing in running the organisations without the financial backing of any one. Hardikar had also pointed out to his brother that Lalaji had even to wash his own clothes, clean his own utensils, and attend to all household work. When the Lokamanya read Hardikar's letter he was very much pained and without wasting any time he made arrangements to send five thousand dollars (nearly Rs. 16,000/- in Indian currency) to him. This was during the First World War. Nothing was allowed to go out of the country. It was very hard to send any assistance or help to Lalaji and his undertaking. Tilak approached Dr. Annie Besant and between them they decided to transmit the money through the medium of the Theosophical Society. Lalaji thanked Tilak profusely and praised his sagacity and his devotion to the cause of Indian freedom. Not a pie of this amount was used by Lalaji for himself.<sup>122</sup>

Earlier President Wilson's war messages and the lofty principles enumerated therein had fired his imagination and he wished that "the whole world could be constituted into one single Republic with President Wilson as its head".<sup>123</sup> As the President of the Indian Home Rule League, New York, he sent the following telegraphic message to the President:

India Home Rule League begs most respectfully to congratulate Your Excellency upon the lofty sentiments of your latest utterance which is bound to thrill the millions of world's "subject races". It constitutes a new charter of world's freedom and the United States should have every reason to be proud of the part she is playing in the war. It is a noble, and a lofty role.<sup>124</sup>

Criticising the choice of Satyendra Sinha (*Later Lord Sinha*) and Maharaja of Bikaner to represent India at the Paris Peace

Conference Lajpat Rai observed that India could have been represented at the impending Peace Conference by the representatives of the people of India, democratically chosen for the purpose.<sup>125</sup> Referring to the German menace to Asia, Lajpat Rai said that "Democratized India will stand by the democratized Russia to her last man."<sup>126</sup>

At the end of the First World War, Lajpat Rai applied for a passport to travel to England, Europe and India but his request was turned down.<sup>127</sup> Questions on the subject were asked in the British Parliament in April 1919 by Colonels Wedgwood and Yate,<sup>128</sup> Earlier at a public meeting held at Banaras on March 2, 1919 a resolution was passed protesting against the prohibition imposed upon Lajpat Rai for entering England.<sup>129</sup> In April Lajpat Rai received the news of Jallianwala Bagh massacre. He felt extremely agitated and longed to be amidst his people at the hour of their ordeal. Finally, the Secretary of State for India decided that Lajpat Rai should be given a passport to return to India.<sup>130</sup>

While he was still in America the Congress session at Amritsar in 1919 thanked Lajpat Rai for his services to the country while in America.<sup>131</sup> It was through his efforts that the question of self-determination for India was put before the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate in the United States. On August 29, 1919, Lajpat Rai, N.S. Hardikar and Dudley Field Malone were allowed to address the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate on behalf of the Indian Home Rule League. Besides pleading for national self-determination for India, they challenged the authority of the Secretary of State for India and the Maharaja of Bikaner to sign the peace treaties and the League's Covenant on India's behalf.<sup>132</sup>

In a pamphlet "A Call to Young India" written by Lajpat Rai in 1919, he denounced the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. He considered the constitutional scheme to be unsatisfactory and lacking in essentials since it granted no power "to the people in the Central Government".<sup>133</sup> He criticised the Moderates for a further split in the Congress by establishing a Moderates' conference in November 1918. He also took them to task for being afraid of the criticism of the Reform scheme. In his opinion the reforms were not given as a matter of concession but because

of the "necessity of the times".<sup>134</sup> At the same time he assailed the Extremists for demanding a time limit for the grant of full Home Rule, forgetting that the authority which fixes the time can cancel it later on. We shall get it when we deserve it."<sup>135</sup>

By this time Lajpat Rai's thought had undergone a change with regard to the conception of freedom. He had begun to feel that agitation for complete independence would not be of any use. Even the Home Rule would have to be fought for vigorously and that too was not to be secured without sacrifices and effective leadership.<sup>136</sup> He had come to believe that both the Moderates and the Extremists had failed in giving the "right lead" to the country.<sup>137</sup> His leanings towards Gandhi were evident. His conception of leadership too matched with Gandhi's. Lajpat Rai wanted a leader who could be fearless, truthful, simple and who would live among the people as a commoner. Then alone could social democracy dawn upon India.<sup>138</sup>

When he received the news of Gandhi's launching of the Satyagraha in India against the Rowlatt Act, Lajpat Rai felt elated and was full of admiration for him. Though he did not fully agree with Gandhi's political ideas, he was in sympathy with the general spirit of his programme. In a letter to Mahatma Gandhi, Lajpat Rai conveyed to him his "heartly admiration for your noble stand, and my unqualified appreciation of your high souled patriotism".<sup>139</sup> He told him that his success in the first attempt at passive resistance in India was "an achievement unique in our history, nay even in the history of the world. It has raised the political consciousness of the country by one big leap and also raised the country in the estimation of the world."<sup>140</sup>

Before Lajpat Rai left America, a farewell dinner was given to him in New York on November 28, 1919. Dudley Field Malone, the Assistant Secretary of State for the United States presided over the function where glowing tributes were paid to Lajpat Rai. Speaking at the occasion Dudley F. Malone said:

My fellow citizens, . . . tonight you have come together to say, I hope, brief farewell to a man who loves his people and his country, and the freedom of his people and his country, who loves liberty above anything and who, happily for them, is going back to them.<sup>141</sup>

The editor of the *Nation*, Oswald Garrison Villard said that Lajpat Rai was:

A wise, brave and sound ambassador, a generous and moderate interpreter of great races to our American Democracy; a profound student of human liberties, with a heart responsive to the upward aspirations of mankind in every clime.<sup>142</sup>

Pethick Lawrence of the English Labour Party, *later* Lord Pethick Lawrence, who was also present on the occasion described him as "a statesman compared with whom very few are equal".<sup>143</sup> He said India could

win freedom in more than one way : they can win freedom for themselves and then win hatred in their own hearts at the same time; but Mr. Lajpat Rai, as I understand him, and the wiser people in my country would rather see India win freedom—win it for herself, win it by action—win freedom and win friendship at the same time, and friendship in her heart and friendship in our heart.<sup>144</sup>

Lajpat Rai reciprocated the sentiment expressed at the meeting. He thanked the American Government, the Liberal and Radical press and the American people for their sympathy for India's cause and also the hospitality shown to him.

Lajpat Rai returned home on Feb. 20, 1920 *via* England where during a short stay he met his socialist friends, H.M. Hyndman, Ramsay Macdonald, George Lansbury, Josiah Wedgewood and George Bernard Shaw.<sup>145</sup> And he came back with the aura of a beloved national leader about him.

The Indian Nationalist Movement was at the crossroads. The emergence of Gandhi in Indian politics was altogether a new factor to reckon with. The oppressive measures of the Rowlatt Act and the inhuman tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh had given nationalism a new dimension. Lajpat Rai had been away from the national scene but during his stay abroad he had continued to serve the country as an unofficial ambassador by winning friends and influencing people in support of her freedom.



## Notes

1. Quoted in D. B. Mathur, *Gokhale : A Political Biography*, op. cit., p. 343.
2. See M. R. Palande (Ed.), *Source Material for A History of the Freedom Movement in India* (Government of Bombay, 1958), Vol. II, p. 163.
3. Annie Besant, *How India Wrought For Freedom*, op. cit., p. 466.
4. Dhananjay Keer, *Lokamanya Tilak*, op. cit., p. 273.
5. Ibid., p. 275.
6. *Bande Mataram*, December 18, 1907. Also see Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, *Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics*, op. cit., p. 258.
7. See Dhananjay Keer, op. cit., pp. 276-7.
8. *Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, op. cit., p. 108. Sir J. P. Hewett wrote to Dunlop Smith on April 1, 1908 : "There is no doubt that the people of advanced views, and indeed the educated community generally, are inclined to treat him as a hero if not as a martyr." See Martin Gilbert, *Servant of India : Sir James Dunlop Smith* (Longmans, Green & Co. London, 1966), p. 142.
9. See *The Surat Congress and Conferences* (G. A. Natesan & Co. Madras, 1908), pp. 22-4. Also see *The Surat Congress 1907*, I.O.L. Tract 1042 quoted in Daniel Argov, *Moderates and Extremists in Nationalist Movement*, op. cit., pp. 132-3. And *Indian Review*, December 1907.
10. Ibid., p. 29. "The National Congress is definitely committed only to constitutional methods of agitation to which it is fast moored. If the new party does not approve of such methods and cannot work harmoniously with the old, it has no place within the pale of the Congress. Secession, therefore, is the only course open to it."
11. Ibid., p. 32. Regarding Lajpat Rai, Rash Behari Ghosh said that "though a martyr may be worshipped for his sufferings and his sacrifices, he is not always counted among the wisest of men and his example is more frequently admired than followed."
12. Ibid., p. 117.
13. Ibid.
14. See A. C. Mazumdar, *Indian National Evolution* (G.A. Natesan and Co., Madras, 1917, Appendix B.
15. Commenting upon this Lala Har Dayal wrote : "It would be a matter of pride for me to work under the guidance of Lala Lajpat Rai. But by joining the Moderate's conference at Surat he donned the livery of slaves and this was against his own prestige." See Dharmavira, *Lala Har Dayal*, op. cit., pp. 78-9.
16. *The Surat Congress 1907*, op. cit., "The Convention" Appendix I.
17. C.I.D Report, S. B. Bombay, January 11, 1908. See *Source*

*Material for A History of the Freedom Movement in Indian, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 152-3.*

18. *The Surat Congress 1907*, op. cit., "The Meeting of the Extremists". Appendix IV.

19. See A. C. Mazumdar, *Indian National Evolution*, op. cit., pp. XXXV-XLVIII, Appendix B. Surat Papers.

20. See *Source Material for A History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 155.

21. For Gokhale's Refutation of the Extremist Version on January 8, 1908 at Calcutta see D. B. Mathur, *Gokhale ; A Political Biography*, op. cit., p. 316.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 318.

24. *Sri Aurobindo : The Hope of Man* (Dipti Publications, Pondicherry, 1969), p. 122.

25. *The Panjabee*, July 15, 1909.

26. H. W. Nevins, *The New Spirit in India*, op. cit., p. 243.

27. See *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (Pondicherry, 1953), p. 81. Also see Manoj Das, *Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Century* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1972), p. 24.

28. *The Panjabee*, July 15, 1909.

29. See M. N. Das, *India Under Morley and Minto*, op. cit., p. 100.

30. The creed of the Congress, included in the first article of the Constitution, read as follows : "The objects of the Indian National Congress are the attainment by the people of India of a system of Government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire and a participation by them in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with those members. These objects are to be achieved by constitutional means by bringing about a steady reform of the existing system of administration, and by promoting national unity, fostering public spirit and developing and organising the intellectual, moral, economic and industrial resources of the country." In order to secure affirmation to the First Article, Article II read, "Every delegate to the Indian National Congress shall express in writing his acceptance of the objects of the Congress as laid down in Article I of this constitution. "See Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, op. cit., pp. 470-1.

31. Lajpat Rai's speech at the Nagpur Congress 1920. See *Lala Lajpat Rai : India's Will to Freedom* (Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1921), pp. 119-20.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *The Panjabee*, July 15, 1909.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.* Also quoted in Bimanbehari Majumdar and B. P. Mazumdar, *Congress And Congressmen in the Pre-Gandhian Era* (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1967), p. 73.

36. See Norman G. Barrier, op. cit., pp. 365-6.

37. See Indra Prakash, *Hindu Mahasabha : Its Contribution to India's*

*Politics* (The Laxmi Press, Delhi, 1966), pp. 9-10. Also see B. B. Majumdar, *Indian Political Associations And Reform of Legislatures : 1818-1917*, (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1965) pp. 256-8.

38. See Norman G. Barrier, op. cit., pp. 366-7.

39. Ibid., p. 366. Also see *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXVI, No. 3, May 1967, pp. 378-9.

40. See Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims : The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923* (Vikas Publishing House (P) Ltd., Delhi, 1975), p. 171.

41. *The Maharatta*, February 21, 1909. Also see *The Indian Review*, May 1909.

42. Lajpat Rai to the editor, *Times*, March 4, 1909 quoted in Stanley Wolpert, *Morley and India*, op. cit., p. 196.

43. Lajpat Rai, *Report of People's Famine Relief Movement 1908* (Lahore 1909), p. 4. Also *The Modern Review*, July-December, 1909.

44. *NAI*, Home Political Department Proceedings No. 7, November, 1908 (Deposit).

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., Nos. 32-41, November 1909 (Deposit).

47. Ibid., No. 7, November 1908 (Deposit).

48. *The Panjabee*, July 15, 1909. Commenting upon this exit Stanley Wolpert writes, "Lajpat Rai's loss of resolve and change of itinerary in 1908 may have proved, therefore, a more important negative influence upon recent Indian history than had all his positive agitation." See *Morley and India*, op. cit., p. 112.

49. See Norman G. Barrier, op. cit., pp. 362-3.

50. W. S. Blunt, *My Diaries* (London, 1919), Vol. II, pp. 219-21.

51. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 64.

52. *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 304.

53. Morley wrote to Minto on November 5, 1907 about Lajpat Rai after his release from Mandalay : "If Lajpat opens fire again we shall certainly support you to the uttermost in again putting his fire out by a douche of deportation." See Mary, Countess of Minto, *India : Minto and Morley*, op. cit., p. 163.

54. *The Modern Review*, July 1909.

55. Ibid.

56. *The Indian Review*, June 1913. On September 10, 1927, Lajpat Rai made a forceful appeal for the removal of untouchability in a conference held at Simla. See *The People*, September 22, 1927.

57. Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, op. cit., p. 231.

58. *The Tribune*, August 25, 1911. Also see Algurai Shastri, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., pp. 274-5. And *NAI*. D.C.I. Report, Home Political Department Proceedings, Part-B, October 1911, Nos. 46-49.

59. See Sitaram Chaturvedi, *Madan Mohan Malaviya* (Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1972), p. 58.

60. NAI, Home Proceedings (Confidential) No. 1088 (SB), File 121-129, November, 1911.

61. C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny*, op. cit., p. 83.

62. Ibid.

63. He himself had been a victim of racial discrimination once. In 1905 he was going to Ceylon in a steamer, in the company of Ganga Prasad Varma. They were the solitary occupants of the second-class deck. Since the weather was hot and sultry and their cabin a little uncomfortable, they wanted to change over to the first class deck by paying extra money or otherwise. But the English captain of the steamer full of contempt for the Indians did not allow Lajpat Rai to move to the first class deck which was exclusively meant for white passengers. See Peter Mudford, *Birds of a Different Plumage : A Study of British Indian Relations From Akbar to Curzon* (Collins, London, 1974), p. 208.

64. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I*, op. cit., p. 112.

65. Algurai Shastri, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., pp. 284-5.

66. NAI, Home Pol. (Secret) File No. : 55, June 23, 1919, 760.

67. *The People*, November 14, 1929.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. See Ram Nath Suman, *Lala Lajpat Rai* (Sadhna Sadan, Allahabad, 1965), pp. 120-1.

75. *Jhang Sial* (Lahore), October 28, 1914.

76. C. F. Andrews and Girija K. Mookerjee, *The Rise and Growth of Congress in India* (Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1967), p. 147.

77. Quoted in R. Palme Dutt, *India Today* (People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1947), p. 275.

78. *India*, August 14, 1914.

79. See Algurai Shastri, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., p. 306. Also see D. S. Sahota, *Lala Lajpat Rai : His Life And Thought*, op. cit., p. 15.

80. The Earl of Ronaldshay has expressed his indebtedness, for the facts and the quotations concerning the educational activities of the Arya Samaj, to Lajpat Rai's *The Arya Samaj*. See *The Heart of Aryavarta: A Study of the Psychology of Indian Unrest* (Constable, London, 1925), p. 72.

81. *Daily News*, July 28, 1914. Also see *India*, July 31, 1914.

82. *India*, August 7, 1914.

83. See Algurai Shastri, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., pp. 306-7.

84. *The People*, April 13, 1929.

85. Ibid. Among the Indian revolutionaries, Lajpat Rai rated V. D. Savarkar very high. He put Lala Har Dayal on the opposite and Auro-

bindo, in his opinion, stood midway between the two. See Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar* (Popular Prakashan Bombay, 1966), pp. 118-19. Another revolutionary who left a profound impact on him was Sister Nivedita to whom he was introduced by Gokhale in Calcutta in 1905.

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid.

88. Lajpat Rai, *Indian Revolutionaries in the United States and Japan*, See *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 198.

89. *NAI*, Lajpat Rai's Diary; "Recollections of his life and work for an independent India while living in the United States and Japan 1914, 1917." p. 3 (*Microfilm*).

90. Ibid., p. 5.

91. See *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit. p. 199. Also see A. C. Bosc, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad* (Bharati Bhavan, Patna, 1971), p. 93.

92. It is a gross misrepresentation of facts to say that Lajpat Rai "During his stay abroad is believed to have supported the Ghadar Party's programme." cf. S. P. Sen (Ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. II (E-L) (Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, 1973), p. 389.

93. Lajpat Rai's close friend Professor Edwin R.A. Seligman happened to be the teacher of B. R. Ambedkar. Later, Lajpat Rai tried to obtain Ambedkar's support to the cause of India's freedom while in America. But Ambedkar politely expressed his inability to do so while in the patronage of the Maharaja of Baroda. See Dhananjay Keer. *Dr. Ambedkar : Life and Mission* (Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1971, 3rd. ed.), p. 31.

94. See K. Sampathagiri Rao, *Gray But Fresh* (Dr. N. S. Hardikar Diamond Jubilee Trust, Hubli, n.d), p. 61. Also see N. S. Hardikar, *Lala Lajpat Rai in America* (Servants of the People Society, New Delhi, n. d.), p. 2. He writes : "When Dr. Emen De Valera, who had escaped from the London jail and crossed the mighty Atlantic Ocean to reach America, met Lajpat Rai in New York City, the two patriots embraced each other out of love and gave expression to their feelings that their countries would surely achieve their independence."

95. See *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 201. This sets to rest the allegation, in the Government circles, that Lajpat Rai was an agent of the Berlin Committee and that since the Berlin Committee was backed by the Bolsheviks, he was a Bolshevik agent. cf. N.M.P. Srivastava, *Growth of Nationalism in India : Effects of International Events* (Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1973), p. 111.

96. Ibid., p. 202.

97. *NAI*, Lajpat Rai's Diary, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

98. Lajpat Rai's famous work *Young India, An Interpretation and History of the Nationalist Movement from Within*, was published by B. W. Huebsch, New York, in August 1916 with a foreword by J. T. Sunderland.

99. Kanji Dwarkadas, *India's Fight for Freedom*, (Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1966), p. 27.

100. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 209.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid., p. 210.
103. Ibid., p. 212.
104. Ibid., p. 213. Also see *NAI*, Home Political (Secret) File No. 55, 1919.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid., p. 216. Chakravarty was arrested in U.S.A. on 6th March, 1917. He disclosed the identity of his associates on April 7, 1917, Ram Chandra and sixteen other Indians were arrested in San Francisco. The famous San Francisco trial in which 105 persons were accused as conspirators began on November 20, 1917. On the last day of the trial Ram Chandra was shot dead in the court by one of his comrades, Ram Singh, who in turn was also killed by a Marshall. See N. N. Bhattacharya, "Indian Revolutionaries Abroad (1891-1919)". *The Panjab Past and Present*. Vol. VIII-II, Oct. 1974, 351-65.
107. Ibid, p. 216-17.
108. *M. N. Roy's Memoirs* (Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1964), p. 28.
109. Ibid., p. 26.
110. See *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit , p. 218.
111. Ibid. pp. 218-19. Also see L. P. Mathur, *Indian Revolutionary Movement in the United States of America* (S. Chand & Co , Delhi, 1970), pp. 155-6.
112. See K. Sampathagiri Rao, *Gray But Fresh*, op. cit., p. 62. Also see N. S. Hardikar, *Lala Lajpat Rai in America*, op. cit., p. 7.
113. See *Young India* (Published by the Indian Home Rule League of America, New York City and edited by Lala Lajpat Rai) Vols. 1-3, 1918-1920. *Microfilm*. Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi.
114. Ibid., September, 1919.
115. Ibid., March 1918.
116. Ibid , October 1919.
117. Ibid., May 1919.
118. Ibid., November 1919.
119. Ibid., May 1919.
120. See Mohan Lal, *Lala Lajpat Rai* (V.V.R.I. Hoshiarpur, 1965), p. 97.
121. See *Annual Report of the Servants of the People Society*, 1962 (Lajpat Bhawan, New Delhi, 1965) pp. 2-3. Also see Lajpat Rai, *The United States of America : A Hindu's Impressions and A Study* (R. Chatterjea, Calcutta, 1919), pp. 39-139 for his detailed study of 'Education in the United States' and 'The Education of the Negro'.
122. See *Gray But Fresh*, op. cit., pp. 62-3.
123. *Young India* (New York), February, 1918.
124. Ibid , March 1918.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid.

127. *NAI*, Home Department Proceedings, Political, November 1918, 142. Also see D. O. letter from the Government of Punjab to the Government of India, File no : 372-15, Part-B, June 1918.
128. *NAI*, Home Department Proceedings, Pol. April 1919, 122-125, Part-B.
129. *NAI*, Home Department Proceedings, Pol. March 1919, 72, Part-B.
130. *NAI*, Home Department Proceedings, Political, October 1919, 337-8, Part-B, and April 1920, No. 235-236, Part-B.
131. C. F. Andrews and Girija K. Mookerjee, *The Rise and Growth of Congress in India*, op. cit., p. 166.
132. *Young India* (New York), October 1919.
133. *Lala Lajpat Rai : The Call to Young India* (S. Ganesan & Co., Madras, 1920), pp. 63-4. Also see *Young India* (New York) August 1918.
134. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-5.
135. *Ibid.*
136. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
137. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
138. See *Mahatma Gandhi—The World's Greatest Man: With an Appreciation by Lajpat Rai* (National Literature Publishing Co., Bombay, 1922), p. 1.
139. See *Young India* (Weekly, Ahmedabad), August 13, 1919.
140. *Ibid.*, November 13, 1919.
141. *Young India* (New York), January, 1920. Also quoted in H. N. Dastur, "Lala Lajpat Rai", *Bhavan's Journal*, January 17, 1965.
142. *Ibid.*
143. *Ibid.*
144. *Ibid.*
145. See *Writings And Speeches. Vol. II*, op. cit., Introduction, p. XLIII.

## CHAPTER IV

### Lajpat Rai and Non-Cooperation

When Lajpat Rai reached Bombay on February 20, 1920 he was warmly received by Jinnah, Annie Besant, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and other nationalists. Jinnah presided over the meeting arranged to honour him and hailed him as one of the greatest sons of India.<sup>1</sup> Tilak also had high praise for Lajpat Rai.<sup>2</sup>

In his reply Lajpat Rai advocated Hindu-Muslim unity, not as 'a measure of political expediency', nor also for 'the temporary benefit of this community or that' but "as a fundamental doctrine that. . . will be a great asset to our political future".<sup>3</sup> He pleaded for status of equality for India in the British Commonwealth of Nations and said that "Unless the British Empire is soon converted into a British Commonwealth it will go to the dogs as other Empires have gone."<sup>4</sup>

About the new star in the firmament of Indian politics, namely, Gandhi, he said—

Where in the world shall we find another man equal in spirit, self-sacrifice and righteousness, equal to Mahatma Gandhi? We may or may not agree with his views. We may or may not follow him. But I challenge the whole world to produce another man like Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>5</sup>

Earlier, in August 1918, referring to the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, Lajpat Rai had said: "The Reforms we shall utilise to the fullest extent. We do not intend to boycott them. . . . We shall utilise every possible avenue, every possible opportunity left to us. To do otherwise would be unwise and insane."<sup>6</sup>

Tilak was happy to know that Lajpat Rai was not fully converted to the Gandhian views and that he wanted to work



the Reforms of 1919.<sup>7</sup> Giving a different account, S.L. Karandikar writes:

During his conversation with Lajpat Rai, Tilak felt that Lajpat Rai was not in the complete know of the responsive-cooperation policy and he feared that Lajpat Rai might be influenced by Gandhi. He, therefore, wrote to Khaparde in Delhi to be in constant touch with Lajpat Rai in Delhi. Tilak warned Khaparde, 'Take care that Mr. Gandhi does not influence him the other way.'<sup>8</sup>

The Moderates drifted away from the Congress under the leadership of Surendranath Banerjea and convened the All India Moderates' Conference at Bombay on November 1, 1918. They met for the second time at Calcutta in December 30, 1919. Supporting the Montague-Chelmsford reforms they called for some positive work instead of non-cooperation.<sup>9</sup> But the massacre at Jallianwalla, the flogging at Lahore, Kasur, Amritsar and Gujranwalla, and the bombing of Gujranwalla had established it beyond doubt that the bureaucracy was determined to wreck the Reforms. To enquire into the events in the Punjab under Martial Law in 1919, the Government appointed the Hunter Commission. The Congress set up its own Committee to inquire into the episode. Gandhi as one of the authors of the *Congress Inquiry Report on the Punjab Disturbances* felt deeply humiliated at the findings of the Inquiry. Yet he recommended at the Amritsar Congress in December 1919 "that the Reforms should be accepted and worked in a constitutional manner".<sup>10</sup> The Amritsar Congress Resolution, although critical of the constitutional reforms as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing" accepted the programme of Council entry for the establishment of responsible government. That Resolution read:

... this Congress trusts that, so far as may be possible, the people will so work the Reforms as to secure an early establishment of full Responsible Government and this Congress offers its thanks to Rt. Hon. E.S. Montagu for his labours in connection with the Reforms.<sup>11</sup>

But Gandhi reversed his stand in 1920. "When the House of Lords passed a resolution", writes C.F. Andrews, "refusing to condemn General Dyer, and the Hunter Commission Report wavered in its own condemnation of official action; when at the same time the Treaty of Sevres was signed which shattered every hope of a generous treatment of Turkey at the conclusion of the War; then at last his cup of humiliation was full, and he made the great decision of his life to refuse to cooperate any longer with the British Government in India until both these wrongs were righted and Swaraj was obtained."<sup>12</sup> Gandhi was ready with his conception of non-violent non-cooperation.

Khilafat was a new factor in Indian politics in 1920. The Khilafat day was observed on March 19 of that year. Hakim Ajmal Khan returned to the Viceroy the *Kaisar-i-Hind* Gold medal. Gandhi too returned his *Kaisar-i-Hind* Gold medal, the Zulu War Medal and Boer War medal.<sup>13</sup>

The wind was blowing in favour of the Non-cooperation programme launched by Gandhi. The Central Khilafat Committee had endorsed the programme on March 14, 1920 and it had already started propaganda in its favour. As Francis Robinson writes:

On 22nd March at Delhi, fifteen Muslims and Gandhi discussed the non-cooperation plan with nine Hindu leaders, among them Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Tilak, with the aim of gaining their support. The Hindu politicians were not impressed. Malaviya doubted that many Muslims would implement the policy; Lajpat Rai was more interested in Swadeshi. Tilak thought it was all nonsense. Even some of the Muslims were not entirely in favour of the Central Khilafat Committee's plan: Abdul Bari jibed at the restriction of non-violence; Hakim Ajmal Khan was diffident—non-cooperation put an end to his hopes of a government grant for his beloved Tibbia (Medical) College. Nevertheless a committee composed of Gandhi, Lajpat Rai, Ajmal Khan, Shaukat Ali and Azad examined the Central Khilafat Committee's programme. . . .<sup>14</sup>

The members of the All India Congress Committee met at Benaras on May 30, 1920 to discuss matters arising out of the publication of the Hunter Report and the attitude of the Secretary of State towards the Punjab affairs. The Congress Enquiry Committee had found the government of India and the Punjab Government guilty of harsh measures enforced through Martial Law in Punjab. The All India Congress Committee resolved to hold a special session of the Congress at Calcutta. Here Lajpat Rai opposed Gandhian programme of non-cooperation. But he changed his stance as soon as he found the contents of the Hunter Report injurious to the interests of Punjab. Commenting on the change, Francis Robinson writes:

Those (rules and regulations of the Council) for the Punjab showed that Hindus who lived in the towns of the province, the very groups whose political expression had been limited for so long by government would have little chance of power. The Punjab Congress Committee, though full of protest, had at first seemed willing to work the new council, and at the Benaras All India Congress Committee meeting of the end of May its spokesman, Lajpat Rai, had been among the strongest opponents of non-cooperation. Three weeks after the publication of the Hunter Report, however, he executed a *volte-face*. He called for a boycott of the reformed Punjab Council; first, because the statements of the Government of India and the Secretary of State on the Hunter Report implied that they condoned the Punjab government's policy of silencing the 'educated community', and the rules and regulations of the reformed council, 'partake of the same character'; second, because the officers responsible for the martial law excess were still in the government, some would sit on the reformed council, and in such circumstances it would not be possible to work the reforms in the proper spirit.<sup>15</sup>

Lajpat Rai himself "stressed both in his *Bande Mataram* (Mid-June 1920) statement and in a letter to the *Tribune* of 3rd July, 1929 that it was the Hunter Report which had led him to take up his new position regarding the council".<sup>16</sup>

Gandhi saw the opportunity and on June 24, 1920 he announced the council boycott for the whole of India. The Provincial Congress Committees were in tune with Gandhi's direction. They were simply waiting for the formal approval of the programme at the Special Session. Lajpat Rai said that there could be,

no cooperation between a foreign government and the leaders of a subject race. The cooperation of a "conquered race" in the working of administering a "conquered" country is practically an admission of the right of the conquerors to rule the conquered territory. Such an admission is very damaging to the psychology of the conquered race.<sup>17</sup>

Sometimes cooperation became necessary as means to an end. But it was to be avoided to the maximum extent by refusing to serve under a foreign government and by not accepting office in the legislature till a full majority was obtained with a view to have "a determining voice".<sup>18</sup> He further wrote:

I personally do not believe in entering the Legislative Council with the express object of defeating the Reforms Scheme or of obstructing the Government or even of denying my cooperation in measures which are only incidental to the main springs of Government Policy. It is not in my nature to be either obstructive or obstinate. In my judgement the task before the new Legislative Councils is almost impossible. There will be even greater temptation, in the way of members, of selling themselves and their conscience . . . . Under the circumstances I think I can be more useful to my country from outside than from within the Council.<sup>19</sup>

Thus it is erroneous to conclude that Lajpat Rai did not like Non-cooperation to be carried to the extent of the Council boycott.<sup>20</sup>

The *Bande Mataram*, the Urdu daily (later Weekly) founded and edited by Lajpat Rai from Lahore (1920) became his mouthpiece during the Non-cooperation movement. The paper started by Lajpat Rai after his return from the United States became so popular that its circulation rose into thousands.

During the Civil Disobedience days, after the arrest of Lajpat Rai, its subsequent editors courted arrest one after the other.

### **The Calcutta Congress**

The historic Congress session met at Calcutta on September 5, 1920 under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai who had been elected unanimously. Gandhi had launched his Non-cooperation programme on August 1, 1920. Lokamanya Tilak died on the same day. "That Tilak should have died, writes Durga Dass "on the day fixed by Gandhi to launch his programme was significant. It marked the end of one era and the beginning of another."<sup>21</sup> As the President-elect of the Congress, Lajpat Rai invited the Moderates to attend the Special Session in order to bring about reconciliation between the Moderates and the Extremists. In his reply Surendranath Banerjea expressed his inability to attend the Congress.<sup>22</sup>

This Special Session had been convened to consider the Hunter Report, the Turkish Peace Treaty and Non-cooperation. As many as twenty thousand people attended the Session, out of whom there were five thousand delegates from various provinces. There were an unusually large number of Muslim delegates, who came to the Congress with the determination of supporting the Non-cooperation programme. The delegates' camps were humming with unusual activities. C.R. Das who opposed Gandhi had considerable support from Bengal. He got a strong contingent from Maharashtra also to stall Gandhi's attempt to have the resolution on non-violent Non-cooperation passed.<sup>23</sup> Lajpat Rai himself was not in favour of Gandhi's Non-cooperation.<sup>24</sup> Kanji Dwarkadas writes:

... Motilal Nehru, who had come to meet Jinnah at the Howrah station told him in my presence that Gandhi-ji wanted to pass a non-cooperation resolution and that this would mean boycott of the legislature and he (Motilal) suggested to Jinnah that all of them together, i.e., Jinnah, Malaviya, C.R. Das, Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru, Mrs. Besant and others should combine to defeat the resolution.<sup>25</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru agreed with this account when he wrote that "Lala Lajpat Rai was not alone in this opposition; he had a

great and impressive company with him. Indeed, almost the entire old Guard of the Congress opposed Gandhi's resolution of non-cooperation."<sup>26</sup>

Lajpat Rai's long, extempore presidential address at the Calcutta session needs to be closely studied. Its historic importance is obvious. Besides, it contains his ideas on almost all the great problems of the day.<sup>27</sup> In the address, Lajpat Rai concentrated mainly on three important national problems, viz., the Punjab disorders, the Khilafat question and the Reforms. He remained "non-committal on the Non-cooperation question".<sup>28</sup> Regarding the Punjab tragedy, Lajpat Rai levelled scores of charges, supported by concrete facts against Sir Michael O'Dwyer. He went to the extent of demanding the resignation of the then Viceroy Lord Chelmsford.

The Government of India too must shoulder their share of the responsibility for the Punjab tragedy. . . . If the view which the British Cabinet has taken of General Dyer's action and of the excesses of the Martial Law administration is correct . . . then I submit the least that Lord Chelmsford can do with honour is to retire from his high office.

Further :

If Mr. Austin Chamberlain thought it his duty to resign his office on account of the verdict of the Mesopotamia Commission, I submit there is enough in the Hunter Committee's Report (of both the majority and the minority) which should induce Lord Chelmsford to take the same honourable course.<sup>29</sup>

On the question of Khilafat, which was worrying seventy million Indian Muslims, Lajpat Rai concerned himself only with the political aspect of the problem, leaving the religious aspect to the Muslims themselves.<sup>30</sup> He sensed great danger in the extension of British influence as a result of the Turkish Peace Treaty.

I maintain that any further extension of the British Empire in Asia is detrimental to the interests of India and fatal to the liberties of the human race. The British have frequently

used Indian troops to conquer various parts of Asia and Africa. . . . British suzerainty in Arabia and British occupation of Mesopotamia involves the practical absorption of Persia and Central Asia and perhaps, later of Afghanistan as well, into the British Empire.<sup>31</sup>

Lajpat Rai believed that as a result, the general public in those countries would be disarmed and some of them would be enlisted in the Army. This would leave the way open for raising Arabian, Persian and Afghan regiments and then placing them in India to the detriment of India's freedom. Lajpat Rai therefore argued:

If the British Imperialist has no scruples in using Indian troops in Egypt, Persia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Central Asia, why will he have any in using the troops he raises in these countries against us? The Hindu Muslim problem will become ten times more troublesome and dangerous, if this turns out to be true.<sup>32</sup>

This was the new dimension that Lajpat Rai tried to give to the Khilafat movement. He did not lose sight of another aspect of this problem. He held that if the Muslim population of these countries continued its resistance against the British forces, India would be burdened with enormous expenditure in footing the bill of the British campaigns. If these territories were to come under the British Empire as Mandates, then also, they would cause a heavy drain on Indian resources, both human and economic. And he knew that both the League of Nations and the United States would be eventually unconcerned about solving these crucial problems arising out of the World War I.<sup>33</sup>

Lajpat Rai thus justified the need for Hindu-Muslim unity. A closer understanding between the two communities was the call of the hour.<sup>34</sup> There was no sense in playing into the hands of the British bureaucrats whose policy was to divide and rule. The bureaucracy was alarmed at the successful expression of Hindu-Muslim unity over the Amritsar tragedy as well as the Khilafat movement.<sup>35</sup>

### Reforms

As regards the Montford Reforms, Lajpat Rai believed along with others that the rules and regulations and the decisions of the Joint Select Committee of the British Parliament had taken away the content of the Reforms.<sup>36</sup> To him, the Reforms Act was disappointing. In fact, it was a victory of the bureaucracy and defeat of the Indian people. He therefore said:

It will be a marvel of good fortune, if with all the distinctions of Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs and Christians, of urban and rural, of Brahmans and non-Brahmans, of residents and non-residents, of British subjects and those of Native States, of military and civil made in the Rules and Regulations, we are still able to evolve a national spirit which will rise above these differences and consolidate us into one people, with a will to leave and prosper as a free nation.<sup>37</sup>

### Non-Cooperation

On the question of Non-cooperation, Lajpat Rai maintained an attitude of neutrality. He had reservations on this vital issue and as President of the Congress he did not want to take sides. Although he made general observation on the Non-cooperation programme, he qualified it with a prior note of neutrality. He said that "the President of the Indian National Congress is the mouthpiece of the country only on questions on which the country is unanimous or practically unanimous. . . . I have my personal opinion on the questions involved in the programme of Non-cooperation but. . . I will conduct the proceedings without taking sides."<sup>38</sup>

Ultimately, Gandhi moved his famous resolution dealing with Non-cooperation. The resolution was contested by Bipin Chandra Pal and Desbhandhu C.R. Das. After a long consideration the resolution was finally put to vote. Lajpat Rai "asked all the visitors to leave the Pandal and personally supervised the registering of votes. . . . At the end of the count Gandhi won by 1855 against 883."<sup>39</sup>



The victory of Gandhi compelled the leaders of the Congress to fall in line after him, one by one, and as Lajpat Rai put it, they 'tacked' the Congress on the Khilafat Committee.<sup>40</sup> Ten or twelve days after the passing of the resolution on Non-cooperation, Motilal Nehru, under the influence of his son Jawaharlal yielded to Gandhi.<sup>41</sup> But Lajpat Rai offered a stiff opposition and took the longest time in being converted to Gandhi's views.<sup>42</sup> In the words of Pattabhi Sitaramayya:

Lalaji's turn to preside over the Congress came rather late. At the special session of the Congress in September 1920 he was like a fish out of water. He never saw eye to eye with the progenitors of the Non-cooperation movement and even in this concluding speech predicted only failure for it. He was a fighter but not a Satyagrahi.<sup>43</sup>

Lajpat Rai was particularly opposed to the wording of the resolution on Non-cooperation passed at Calcutta Special Session. To him the resolution appeared to be ambiguous and led one nowhere. He contended that it was not binding. Its wording, especially with regard to the boycott of schools by students and the boycott of foreign goods, left much to be clarified. Lajpat Rai was of the opinion that the school-going children should not be stopped from receiving education. Though he was against the prevalent system of education and wanted drastic changes in the curricula, he thought it improper to distract the children from their studies as their boycotting the schools was considered by him tantamount to idling and against the task of nation building.<sup>44</sup> He disapproved of the boycott of Government schools for this reason.<sup>45</sup> Similarly he disapproved of boycotting the engineering and the medical college. He was not against the closure of the law colleges and the arts colleges. But there too he left much to the conscience of the college students and their parents to decide the opportune course.<sup>46</sup> When the resolution was redrafted and improved upon for reconsideration at the Nagpur Congress, Lajpat Rai was in full accord with it, since all the ambiguities had been removed.<sup>47</sup>

### The Nagpur Congress

The next session of the Congress met in Nagpur in December 1920. The main issue before the Congress was the acceptance of the Non-cooperation resolution of the Special Calcutta Congress. As hinted earlier, by this time the outlook of Lajpat Rai had undergone a change. He supported the Non-cooperation resolution. Gandhi's "presence dissolved the opposition, and the doubters were nearly won over. In a rapture of excitement, Das moved and Lajpat Rai seconded the main resolution."<sup>48</sup>

Gandhi's success at Nagpur was an event. More so as it was achieved with the support of his erstwhile opponents C.R. Das and Lajpat Rai.<sup>49</sup> In this connection M.R. Jayakar wrote:

Lajpat Rai caused considerable surprise by seconding the Resolution. People's minds turned to his speech clear and convincing, at the previous session at Calcutta only a few months ago. He was the greatest capture Gandhi secured at Nagpur.<sup>50</sup>

While supporting the new resolution on Non-cooperation at the Nagpur Congress, Lajpat Rai said:

That practically removes all the possible objections, at least so far as I am concerned, which I had to the old resolution, and now I want to recall to you the words which I addressed to you at the special session of the Congress in spite of my difference of opinion with the resolution as it stood then. I told you and I want to repeat to you, that after the resolution has been carried out by this house it becomes our bounden duty to observe it and carry it out in practice so that no one shall say that we pass resolutions and do not give effect to them.<sup>51</sup>

In the same speech Lajpat Rai hailed the success of Non-cooperation with regard to Council entry. He believed that the Congress propaganda had succeeded in keeping a majority of the people out of the Councils, irrespective of their personal

opinion and belief in the Non-cooperation programme.<sup>52</sup> In fact, leaving aside a microscopic minority of the Moderates who had cut themselves off from the Congress mainstream by the end of the year 1920, the nation responded well to Gandhi's call. But Lajpat Rai would not stop here.<sup>53</sup> He wanted the agitation to reach its ultimate aim. As he said:

The logical conclusion to which it can be carried and it ought to be carried has been embodied in that clause of this resolution which deals with the Council elections. We must continue to ask the voters, those who have been given the franchise, to show by persistent declaration that those men who have gone into the councils do not represent them.<sup>54</sup>

This was meant to serve a dual purpose. First, this would show to Government and to the people that those who had gone to Councils against the nation's wishes were not true representatives of the nation. And secondly, it would bring the masses into the camp of Non-cooperation.<sup>55</sup>

To revert to Nagpur, the determination of the Congress to establish Swaraj<sup>56</sup> and to raise the All India Tilak Memorial Swarajya Fund,<sup>57</sup> made Lajpat Rai overjoyous. This came to him as the fulfilment of his cherished dream which he shared along with Tilak. It was a moment of triumph for the Nationalists, and Lajpat Rai as a part of that trio of Extremists, Lal-Bal-Pal, voiced his sentiments at the inclusion of the name of his great friend and colleague, Tilak, in the resolution in these words:

I rejoice in saying that in this resolution the name of Mr. Tilak has been added to give it a more effective support by his life. If the spirit of one after death can look upon their work with greater pleasure and solace and consolation, the spirit of the late Bal Gangadhar Tilak when he reads this resolution will rejoice that the country has taken this step.<sup>58</sup>

He further reiterated:

As the business of getting our emancipation is Swaraj I again rejoice that in the first part of this resolution the first

place has been given to Swaraj. I rejoice at the change also, because in my view that is the point that has to be constantly kept in view . . . that Swaraj is the final goal. . . .<sup>59</sup>

But Lajpat Rai's support to the resolution was criticised by at least one section of the people. The delegates from Maharashtra took Lajpat Rai's remarks as an "unintelligible *volte face*."<sup>60</sup>

The highlight of the Nagpur Congress was the change in the creed of the Congress. The new creed declared by Gandhi read. "The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of Swaraj by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means."<sup>61</sup> Lajpat Rai praised this change as of the utmost importance for the present and the future.<sup>62</sup>

Twice in his life time, he associated himself with the change in the creed of the Congress, once at Allahabad in 1908 to consider the draft of the creed after the Surat Split, and again at the Nagpur Congress. The change was noticeable since it replaced the words "constitutional means" with "legitimate and peaceful means". The latter put emphasis on self-reliance, as against the Moderates' method of constitutionalism and legalism. It also added vigour to the Congress programme. But the attainment of Swaraj was not to be confused with that of complete independence. The pledge for complete independence was still far away. Till then, the general feeling was to remain an integral part of the British Commonwealth. Lajpat Rai, while seconding the resolution on the change in the creed of the Congress, remarked:

Even at the present moment I am not prepared to say that the majority of the assembly or the vast majority of thinking people in the country are prepared to say that we will at once go in for complete independence or that we are going to fight for it at once, or that we shall not remain within the British Commonwealth, if that were possible for us to do.<sup>63</sup>

The creed of the Congress in 1908 had as its object the attainment of Dominion Status for India. But the Nagpur resolution made no mention of it. Lajpat Rai drew attention

to this change of attitude which the passing of years had brought about in clear terms. He said:

What does the change in the creed aim at? A notice to the British public and the British Government that although we do not at the present moment aim, directly aim, to go out of the British Empire, or what we may call the British Commonwealth but if we remain in the British Commonwealth or the British Empire we shall not remain at the dictation of anybody or by fear. We shall remain there by our own free choice and free will, and that free choice and free will we can only exercise and express when we are allowed to do so by legitimate means.<sup>61</sup>

The Nagpur Congress provided Lajpat Rai with a platform for vigorous public activity once again. He actively worked for the success of non-cooperation. Under the leadership of Lajpat Rai, the Arya Samajists took a prominent part in the Non-cooperation Movement.<sup>65</sup> In an article "Non-Cooperation Movement ordered by Vedas: Swami Dayanand's Message", Lajpat Rai said that the Vedas taught the creed of Non-cooperation. He also said that Dayanand supported the people's right to revolt against the State.<sup>66</sup> The people's response to no-vote campaign, boycott of colleges and courts and national education was quite encouraging. But he had still some reservations about Gandhi's programme. About the Khilafat movement particularly he said:

Do you realise that in our effort to carry the Muslims with us we have adopted the Khilafat programme which, if successful, will make them more fanatical? I have this conflict in mind. We have to get rid of the British, we have to carry the Muslims with us. May be this gamble of the Mahatma will pay off. I shall watch and decide my course of action later. For the present, I go with Gandhi. To the extent it will strengthen the nationalist movement and revive faith in our own culture, I will back it.<sup>67</sup>

Similarly, he had no absolute faith in Gandhi's *Ahimsa*. It looked to him "as the rationalised spinelessness of the Hindu

past.”<sup>68</sup> But he could not ignore the political currents of the time. He knew that there was no alternative to Gandhi.<sup>69</sup>

### **Other Interests**

Lajpat Rai turned his attention to trade unions and students in 1920. Lajpat Rai presided over the first All India Trade Union Congress held in Bombay on November 7, 1920. Referring to the need for organised labour, he said:

Militarism and Imperialism are the twin children of capitalism; they are one in three and three in one. Their shadow, their fruit and their bark—all are poisonous. It is only lately that an antidote has been discovered and that antidote is organised labour.<sup>70</sup>

He also urged the workers to develop contact with workers in other countries and “to forge a link in the chain of international brotherhood”.<sup>71</sup>

He was in favour of students’ participation in politics. Presiding over the All India Students’ Conference at Nagpur on December 25, 1920, he said he was not “one of those who believe that students, particularly university students, ought not to meddle in politics. I think it is a most stupid theory and an impossible theory too. It is the creation not of confused brains but of dishonest brains.”<sup>72</sup> But he wanted the students’ organisation not to get politicized. That would make way for the entry of the dissensions of political parties into students’ organisations and would divide the students’ force.

### **Servants of the People Society**

In December 1920, Lajpat Rai started a School of Politics on the pattern of the Rand School of New York and named it after Tilak.<sup>73</sup> In 1921, the School became a part of the National College opened at Lahore in the wake of the non-cooperation campaign. Its aim was to train youngmen for political and social service of the nation and combined theoretical study of the social sciences with practical, active social service. This objective was achieved by establishing a society

of life members on the pattern of Gokhale's *Servants of India Society* of Poona. Lajpat Rai named it as the *Servants of the People Society*.<sup>74</sup> He donated his house and his library to it. It was formally inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi<sup>75</sup> on November 9, 1921.<sup>76</sup> By March 1928, a number of prominent Congress leaders were actively associated with it. Among them were Mohanlal, Chhabil Das, Amar Nath Vidyalkar, Balvantrai Mehta, Algu Rai Shastri, Mohanlal Gautam, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Raja Ram Shastri, Harihar Nath Shastri, Lingraj Misra, Jagan Nath, Achint Ram, Gopabandhu Das, Baldev Chaube, Feroz Chand, Purshottam Lal Sondhi, Dr. Gopichand Bhargava and Babu Pursuhottam Das Tandon.<sup>77</sup> Here it must be mentioned that the Satyavadi School and the *Samaj* newspaper and printing press established by Gopabandhu Das in Orissa were made over to the *Servants of the People Society*, Lahore.<sup>78</sup> Lal Bahadur Shastri, who rose to be the Prime Minister of India, was admitted to the *Servants of the People Society* at the age of 22. Lajpat Rai "was much impressed with his sincerity and earnestness and so he did not hesitate to admit him to the life membership of the S.P.S."<sup>79</sup>

Throughout the year 1921, Lajpat Rai was deeply immersed in political activities. On January 15, he urged the D.A.V. College students to boycott their studies and to force the college to close down.<sup>80</sup> He proposed nationalization of the D.A.V. College under the non-cooperation programme.<sup>81</sup> In February 1921, Lajpat Rai proposed to visit the North West Frontier Province to make enquiries regarding the grievances of the people but was served with a Prohibitory order on February 9, 1921.<sup>82</sup>

### Congress Activities

The meetings of the All India Congress Committee and its working Committee were convened at Bezwada on March 31 and April 1, 1921. In the meeting due to the efforts of Lajpat Rai and N.C. Kelkar it was decided to send a sum of \$ 1,000 to D.V.S Rao to carry on the activities of the Indian Home Rule League in America.<sup>83</sup> On April 4, 1921, in a meeting at Bombay Lajpat Rai protested against the activities of the

Moderates. He indicted them for supporting the Government in the suppression of the non-cooperation movement and accused them of being disloyal to the country and the people.<sup>84</sup> On 12th May, the Congress Working Committee met at Allahabad. Here "Gandhi and Motilal Nehru", writes P.C. Bamford, "were in favour of effecting a compromise with the Government at that stage, but were opposed by Muhammad Ali and Lajpat Rai on the ground that the Government could not permit the continuance of the agitation while the compromise was under discussion. . . ."<sup>85</sup>

At the meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Bombay in October 1921, the detailed programme for the boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales was hammered out. The Working Committee left the arrangements in the hands of the representative Provincial Congress Committees.<sup>86</sup> On October 4, 1921 Gandhi issued a manifesto, signed by Lajpat Rai and fifty other leaders to Indian soldiers and civilians to sever their connection with the Government of India.<sup>87</sup> "We are also of the opinion that it is the duty of every Indian soldier and civilian to sever his connection with the Government and find some other means of livelihood."<sup>88</sup> The boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales was a tremendous success. In Punjab Lajpat Rai played an active part in implementing the programme as President of the Provincial Congress Committee. But repressive measures of Government soon followed. On December 3, 1921, he was arrested at Lahore along with Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava, K. Santhanam, Malik Lal Khan and other Congress leaders. He was tried under Section 145 of the Criminal Procedure Code, and was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. On the eve of arrest Lajpat Rai wrote to Gandhi: "I believe, we are on the right path and that only non-violent non-cooperation can help us in achieving our goal."<sup>89</sup> He did not put up any defence. But the Government could not enforce his conviction on legal grounds. So he was released on January 31, 1922. But the moment he stepped out of the Lahore Central Jail he was re-arrested on other charges and was finally sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment.<sup>90</sup> By this time prominent leaders like Motilal Nehru,



Jawaharlal Nehru, C.R. Das, Subhash Chandra Bose, etc., were all behind the bars in the non-violent non-cooperation movement.<sup>91</sup>

### **Civil Disobedience and its Suspension**

At the Ahmedabad Congress of December 1921, Gandhi resolved to meet the repression of the authorities by a policy of individual and mass civil disobedience. It was intended to be a passive defiance of law. Gandhi was appointed as a dictator to lead the movement of mass disobedience. Bardoli, a village in Gujarat, was chosen for launching this programme. When the stage was set for the great drama, the mob frenzy at Chauri Chaura on February 5, 1922 provoked Gandhi into suspending the movement. Accordingly, the meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Bardoli on February 12, 1922 passed a resolution for suspending the Civil Disobedience Movement.

The sudden suspension of the movement gave rise to tense feelings in the country.<sup>92</sup> Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das protested from behind the prison bars. According to them, Gandhi was not justified in punishing the whole country "for the sins of a place."<sup>93</sup> In protest against the suspension of Civil Disobedience, Lajpat Rai wrote a letter addressed to the members of the Congress Working Committee from Lahore Jail.<sup>94</sup> He wrote:

With the Bardoli resolution our movement has reached a stage which makes it necessary to have a close searching of the hearts and a clear idea of where and how we stand. Within the last eighteen months, from September 1920 upto date of the Bardoli resolutions we have made several mistakes, both in principles and in practice. . . . These mistakes ought to be openly acknowledged, atoned for and the responsibility for them placed on proper shoulders so that we may be in a position to chalk out our future course of conduct, with surer grasp of the realities of the situation than we have hitherto done.<sup>95</sup>

In this letter,<sup>96</sup> Lajpat Rai also criticised the policy followed by Gandhi. His faith in Gandhi's political leadership was

shaken because he deemed non-violence as an impossibility from the practical point of view.<sup>96</sup> Human nature could not be changed all of a sudden and therefore the occurrence of violence at some place or other could not have been averted by the best efforts of the leaders and the masses. However, he still continued to believe in non-violent non-cooperation. He wrote:

Fundamentally I still believe that non-violent non-cooperation is the only road that will lead us to our goal. I have all my life believed in Non-cooperation with a foreign government. It was left to Mahatma Gandhi to prefix 'Non-violent' to it and to place it before the country in the form of an organised programme. This certainly improved the situation and the cooperation of a section of the great Muslim community made it workable.<sup>98</sup>

He paid glowing tributes to Gandhi for his achievements in politics and credited to his account the honesty of purpose, fearlessness, discipline, self-confidence, suffering for the cause of truth and better understanding between the Hindus and the Mohammedans. These had never been achieved before in the conduct of the freedom movement, so much so that Lajpat Rai estimated Gandhi not only as "the greatest Indian living" but "as one of the greatest of men of all ages, all times and all countries."<sup>99</sup> Even so, he could not exonerate Gandhi for his part in the collapse of the programme of civil disobedience. He further wrote:

Yet that is exactly the reason why we have to swallow the bitter pill of ignominious defeat today, because, say what we may, we have been defeated and that too very badly. Our defeat is in proportion to the greatness of our leader. Several times and in several matters, in the course of the last eighteen months, we surrendered our better judgments to his decision.<sup>100</sup>

Lajpat Rai, in his letter, pointed out to two faulty assumptions which Gandhi had made for the non-cooperation programme. One was the reliance on the Muslim's support and

the other was the fixing up a period of twelve months for achieving Swaraj.<sup>101</sup> He believed that the Muslim support was not adequate in the latter phase of the movement. The enthusiasm of Gandhi and Ali Brothers did not always enjoy the backing of Mohammedans residing in the Frontier Provinces and the Punjab. The Muslims showed keenness for the Khilafat movement, but they were generally lukewarm toward the non-violent non-cooperation.<sup>102</sup>

Another miscalculation, was fixing up a period of twelve months for the completion of non-cooperation programme. This was a reference to Gandhi's slogan of "Swaraj in one year" at the Ahmedabad session of the Indian National Congress in December, 1921. The programme was bound to be defeated not only because of the inadequate response from the countrymen but also because of Gandhi's setting up a time limit for the achievement of such a lofty ideal. Besides, the chances of violence breaking out sporadically could not be eliminated from such a mass movement. To him the Chauri Chaura tragedy was deplorable but occurrences of such violence under provocation and passion were inevitable.

To change the hearts of the mobs in such a way as to make it impossible for them to indulge in these brutalities without changing the hearts of the governments that rule over them is an impossibility. When humanity reaches that point it will cease to be human, it will become a body of superman, of *Devatas* and it will no longer need the guidance of men of the type of Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>103</sup>

A year later, Lajpat Rai recounted the people's reaction to the sudden collapse of the civil disobedience movement based on certain concrete facts. He maintained that some twenty thousand people were arrested and sent to jails. The provinces were without leaders as they had already been arrested. Even then the people contributed money to the tune of ten million rupees within a period of ten months for financing the Gandhian programme, and remained calm under all provocations from Government under the expectations of the *Millennium at Bardoli*. But when all this failed, "disappointment, resentment and anger was bound to follow as a reaction."<sup>104</sup>

The All India Congress Committee met in Delhi on February 24, 1922 and approved the Bardoli resolution. Lajpat Rai treated this as Gandhi's greatest triumph. When a decision to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement was taken at Gaya Congress in December 1922, after the arrest of Gandhi on March 10, 1922, Lajpat Rai regarded it as a testimony to Gandhi's tremendous hold on national politics and the masses.<sup>105</sup>

While Lajpat Rai was in Lahore Central Jail, the citizens of Lahore celebrated July 9, 1923 as Lala Lajpat Rai's Day.<sup>106</sup> He was released on August 16, 1923, because of consumption.

### Council Entry Issue

The collapse of the Non-cooperation Movement gave rise to a desire for council entry among some Congress leaders including Lajpat Rai. A parliamentary wing under the name of the Swarajists emerged in the Congress under the leadership of C.R. Das and Moti Lal Nehru.<sup>107</sup> The "No-changers" under the leadership of C. Rajgopalachari opposed the move for the Council entry and wanted to "go back to Nagpur" resolution on non-cooperation. The issue came for settlement before the Special Session of the Congress convened at Delhi from September 15 to 19, 1923, under the Presidentship of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Lajpat Rai then resting at Solan on account of ill health, appealed to the delegates of the Congress Special Session to maintain unity in the Congress camp and allow those in favour of council entry "the liberty of conscience and action."<sup>108</sup> The Special Session at Delhi set all controversy at rest and suspended the council boycott.

Presiding over the Punjab Provincial Conference at Jaranwala in December 1923, Lajpat Rai criticised the attitude of the No-changers and said:

Let us not pretend to be altogether indifferent as to what happens in the council chambers. The councils wield a great power, at least for mischief and we cannot, even if we wish, adopt an attitude of complete indifference towards them. We cannot but watch with interest the activities of our compatriots in the Assembly and in the different council

chambers. I for one would not even refuse to give them such help as I can give from the outside by way of advice."<sup>109</sup>

### **Hindu-Muslim Problem**

The suspension of the civil disobedience under the non-cooperation programme also brought communal strife to the surface. The Hindu-Muslim unity achieved during the non-cooperation movement and Khilafat agitation had receded in the background. Lajpat Rai henceforward devoted his best efforts to solve the riddle of the Hindu-Muslim antagonism. The serious riots at Sharanpur on August 24, 1923 compelled the Congress to devise methods for communal harmony. The Congress Special Session at Delhi in September 1923 decided to appoint a sub-committee to prepare a draft of a National Pact. Lajpat Rai and Dr. Ansari prepared the draft with the help and advice of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.<sup>110</sup>

In December 1923, Lajpat Rai warned that "If the Hindu-Mohammedan quarrel is not checked, it might engulf the whole country, and might wreck the national movement beyond any possibilities of redemption."<sup>111</sup>

The communal problem remained as it was even after the publication of the National Pact in January 1924. In fact, it got intensified with the Kohat riots. The Kohat riots in September 1924 and the atrocities committed there on the Hindus moved Lajpat Rai. Although he attended the Unity Conference<sup>112</sup> called by Gandhi in September-October 1924 and worked with the Central National Panchayat,<sup>113</sup> his doubts about the Hindu-Muslim unity could not be removed. He expressed the view that the chances of unity were far off unless the "Kohat wounds" were healed.<sup>114</sup> He differed from Gandhi when the latter said that Kohat Hindus should have died defending their lives and temples and that they were guilty of cowardice in not having done so.<sup>115</sup>

In a series of articles in the *Tribune* in November-December 1924, Lajpat Rai systematically and elaborately analysed the Hindu-Muslim problem.<sup>116</sup> He blamed the Khilafat movement, for it "led directly to the revival of a sectarian zeal and to the re-enthroning of influences and forces which were antagonistic

to the idea of a united India.<sup>117</sup> Since India was a country of many religions, there was need for more tolerance than orthodoxy. He criticised the Hindus also for their share in spreading communal dissension. But he argued that "Hinduism is the most tolerant of all the great religions of the world"<sup>118</sup> and "unlike Hinduism, Islam is a faith of dogmas and doctrines".<sup>119</sup> He believed that as long as the Muslims regarded their fellow countrymen, Hindu, as *Kafirs* "all talk of unity between Hindus and Mussalmans is absurd".<sup>120</sup> V.B. Kulkarni writes,

No less a poet than Tagore was repelled by the Muslim Politics of separatism and Pan-Islamism. . . . Ardent nationalists like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and Bhai Parmanand, who needed no lessons in patriotism or secularism, were convinced that unity at any price was both an elusive and dangerous doctrine.<sup>121</sup>

Lajpat Rai urged for the separation of politics from religion. He also objected to communal representation in the form of separate electorates as it further widened the gap between the communities. He was in favour of proportional representation if that could be accepted.<sup>122</sup>

On Maulana Hasrat Mohani's propaganda for separate smaller Muslim States in India, Lajpat Rai—most prophetically suggested the partition of India<sup>123</sup> into a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India—the former composed of the North West Frontier Province, the Western Punjab, Sindh and the Eastern Bengal.<sup>124</sup>

The suggestion of Lajpat Rai was of great historical importance. It would indicate the existence of the idea of partition among the Indian nationalists long before independence. However, this idea was only *one* of the alternatives, and it fundamentally differed from the plan that was actually implemented in 1947. In particular, the partition of India in 1947 was more due to the influence of an external factor, i.e., the British. In retrospect, what Lajpat Rai seemed to be suggesting was some kind of a voluntary agreement between the two parties without external motivation,

Lajpat Rai accepted the existence of *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* movement among the Hindus as a counterpose to Muslim's *Tabligh* and *Tanzim*. Still he aspired for Hindu-Muslim unity. Appealing to the Muslims to change their designs for *Jehad*, he wrote:

Let us live and struggle for freedom as brothers whose interests are one and indivisible. Let us live and die for each other, so that India may live and prosper as a Nation. India is neither Hindu nor Muslim. It is not even both. It is one. It is India.<sup>125</sup>

On January 5, 1925, Lala Lajpat Rai along with Dr. Moonje and Purushottamdas Tandon called on Sri Aurobindo at his Pondicherry Ashram. Lajpat Rai and Sri Aurobindo met privately for about forty-five minutes. Later Dr. Moonje and Purushottamdas Tandon joined them. Talking about the electoral politics Lajpat Rai said: "If you want to get into the governing bodies you must make big promises; that is the nature of democracy!" To this Sri Aurobindo replied in words which are as significant today as much as when they were uttered:

Then why democracy at all? The lust for power will always be there. You can't get over it by shutting out all positions of power; our workers must get accustomed to it. They must learn to hold the position for the nation. This difficulty would be infinitely greater when you get swaraj. These things are there even in Europe. The Europeans are just the same as we are. Only, they have got discipline—which we lack—and a keen sense of national honour which we have not got. . . . What you have to do is to bring about that discipline and that sense of national honour to our people.<sup>126</sup>

Clearly Lajpat Rai left his mark on the stirring years of the non-cooperation movement. From a judicious critic of the movement, he changed into an active participant. His differences with Gandhi, while working with him, show up his own personality and philosophy. He went along with Gandhi as

long as he found his policies effective and beneficial but he parted company with him and joined the Swarajists when the circumstances warranted that step. Lajpat Rai's pragmatism in politics was unmistakable throughout.

## Notes

1. See *The Indian Review*, March 1920. Also see *Young India* (New York) March 1920.
2. See Dhananjay Keer, *Lokamanya Tilak*, op. cit., p. 428.
3. Lala Lajpat Rai : *India's Will to Freedom*, op. cit., p. 84.
4. Ibid., pp. 86-7.
5. Ibid., pp. 90-1.
6. Ibid., pp. 95-6.
7. See Dhananjay Keer, *Lokamanya Tilak*, op. cit., p. 428.
8. See *Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, op. cit., p. 626.
9. See *Report of the Second All-India Conference of the Moderate Party*, Calcutta, December 30, 1919 & Jan. 1, 1920., p. 44.
10. See C. F. Andrews, *Mahatma Gandhiji's Ideas* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1929), p. 228.
11. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 189.
12. See C. F. Andrews, op. cit., pp. 228-9.
13. See Durga Dass, *India From Curzon to Nehru and After* (Collins, London, 1969), pp. 71-2.
14. *Separatism Among Indian Muslims*, op. cit., pp. 308-9.
15. Ibid., pp. 317-18.
16. Ibid., p. 318. Supra.
17. *The Indian Review*, July 1920.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Cf. V. V. Balabushevich and A. M. Dyakov (Eds), *A Contemporary History of India* (People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1964), p. 62.
21. *India From Curzon to Nehru and After*, op. cit., p. 13.
22. See Jagdish Saran Sharma, *The Indian National Congress* (S. Chand and Co., Delhi, 1954), p. 470.
23. Durga Dass, *India From Curzon to Nehru and After*, op. cit., p. 73.
24. Ibid.
25. Kanji Dwarkadas, *India's Fight for Freedom*, op. cit., p. 152.
26. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 64.



27. M. R. Jayakar, *The Story of My life* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1958), Vol. I., pp. 399-401. Also see P. D. Saggi (Ed.) *Life and Work of Lal, Bal and Pal* (Overseas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1962), pp. 31-48.

28. Ibid., p. 390.

29. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. II.* op. cit., pp. 35-6.

30. Ibid., p. 38.

31. Ibid., pp. 39-40.

32. Ibid., p. 40.

33. Ibid., p. 41.

34. Ibid., p. 43.

35. Ibid., p. 42.

36. Ibid., p. 45.

37. Ibid., p. 46.

38. Ibid.

39. Durga Das, *India From Curzon to Nehru and After*, op. cit., p. 74.

40. *Leader* (Allahabad), 12 September, 1920.

41. Kanji Dwarkdas, *India's Fight For Freedom*, op. cit., p. 152. See Also M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1945), p. 610.

42. M. R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life, Vol. I.* op. cit., pp. 375-6. Jayakar wrote: 'Gandhi marched triumphantly through that session, in spite of the opposition offered by men like Das, Malaviya and Lajpat Rai. The last was, perhaps, his strongest opponent and I might say from personal knowledge remained so in thought upto his dying day.' He further wrote, "Lajpat Rai was an Arya Samajist. He had lived a free and many-sided life in America. He was a meat eater; had a strong vigorous virile hatred of British rule, and among Gandhi's many conquests he took the longest time to be converted. When he ultimately fell at Calcutta, he did so in the presence of superior force, which Gandhi had by that time obtained, both in sympathy and in money."

43. *The History of the Indian National Congress*, op. cit., p. 103.

44. See Algurai Shastri, op. cit., p. 344.

45. P.N.N.R., *Bande Mataram*, September 19, 1920.

46. See Algurai Shastri, op. cit., 349.

47. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. II.* p. 68.

48. Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi : A Study in Revolution* (Asia Publishing, Bombay, 1968), p. 208.

49. See Pattabhi Sitarammayya, op. cit., p. 207. He writes, "The support that Gandhi obtained at Nagpur was undoubtedly greater than what he had in Calcutta. In Calcutta, the only top-notch politicians that had lent a helping hand to Gandhi, and that rather late in the session, was Pandit Motilal Nehru, after Gandhi had accepted his amendment to make the boycott of Law courts and colleges gradual. Else the stool of the N.C.O. was resting on but one leg. At Nagpur, it stood in all its four legs with perfect equipoise. Gandhi and Nehru, Das and Lalaji were for it."

50. *The Story of My Life, Vol. I.* op. cit., p. 414.

51. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. II.* op. cit., p. 68.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-9.

53. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 210.

54. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. II.* op. cit., p. 69.

55. *Ibid.*, For Government's role see Anthony Low, "The Government of India and the First Non-cooperation Movement, 1920-22", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 25, 1966, 241-59.

56. See *Report of the Thirty-Fifth I.N.C. Nagpur*, 1920. The first paragraph of the resolution on Non-cooperation read: "Whereas in the opinion of the Congress the existing Government of India has forfeited the confidence of the country; and whereas the people of India are now determined to establish Swaraj; and whereas all methods adopted by the people of India prior to the last Special Session of the Indian National Congress have failed to secure due recognition of their rights and liberties and the redress of their many and grievous wrongs, more especially in reference to the Khilafat and the Punjab."

57. *Ibid.*, Resolution No. 2(i) read, "by taking effective steps to raise a national fund to be called the All India Tilak Memorial Swarajya Fund for the purpose of financing the foregoing National Service and the non-cooperation movement in general."

58. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 70.

59. *Ibid.*

60. See M. R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life, Vol. I.* op. cit., p. 420. Jayakar wrote, "Lajpat Rai's speech, in essence, was an apologia for his change and he explained that his previous objection to the old Resolution relating to the boycott had been practically removed in the new resolution. He knew that many Maharashtrians were at heart against the resolution but swearing in the name of Tilak, he said that he was very glad that that name had been added to this resolution to give it a more effective support."

61. *Report of the Thirty-Fifth I.N.C. Nagpur*, 1920, p. 47.

62. *India's Will to Freedom*, op. cit., p. 118.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

65. See Ganga Prasad Upadhyay, *The Origin, Scope and Mission of the Arya Samaj* (Allahabad, 1954), p. 131.

66. See *Bande Mataram*, January 1921.

67. Durga Das, *India From Curzon to Nehru and After*, op. cit., p. 77.

68. Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi: A Study in Revolution*, op. cit., p. 167. See also Gandhi's reply to Lajpat Rai on the question of non-violence in V. V. Ramana Murti (Ed.), *Gandhi: Essential Writings* (Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1970), pp. 136-9.

69. See M. R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life, Vol. I.*, op. cit., p. 376. Jayakar wrote about Lajpat Rai that "his belated surrender to Gandhi

did not represent any change of opinion at all, but was dictated more by the fruitlessness of continued opposition. The despondency of the situation led to the feeling which then lurkily dominated many other minds, viz., that, after all, it was better to be with Gandhi in the new movement and trim it if possible from within rather than stand out of it and let it spread without control or hindrance. One phase, however, of the new movement attracted men like Lajpat Rai. It was the call for social reform, which formed the inner lining of the Gandhi movement."

70. *India's Will to Freedom*, op. cit., pp. 165-6.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

72. *Indian Review*, January 1921.

73. See *Annual Report, Servants of the People Society*, 1962, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

74. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, *My Master Gokhale* (Model Publications, Madras, 1946), p. 128.

75. See, *Annual Report, The Servants of the People Society*, 1962, op. cit., p. 3.

76. See *Golden Jubilee Souvenir, Servants of the People Society*, New Delhi, Dec., 1972, pp. 23-4.

77. See Lala Jagan Nath, *Short Biography of Lala Lajpat Rai* (Lajpat Centenary Committee, New Delhi, n.d.), p. 19.

78. See S. C. Dash, *Pandit Gopabandhu* (Gopabandhu Sahitya Mandir, Cuttack, 1964), p. 115.

79. See D. R. Manekar, *Lal Bahadur Shastri* (Publications Division, Govt. of India, New Delhi, 1973), p. 38.

80. See R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. III*, op. cit., p. 110. Also see Sri Ram Sharma, *Mahatma Hansraj*, op. cit., 156-61 for the great part of the controversy which arose on the proposed closure of the D.A.V. College by Lajpat Rai, under the Non-cooperation programme. As Lala Hansraj refused to close the College, open letters were freely exchanged between Lajpat Rai and Lala Hansraj.

81. See Algurai Shastri, op. cit., pp. 347-8.

82. *NAI*, Home Political Department Proceedings No. 118, Part B, February 1921.

83. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., pp. 212-13.

84. *The Tribune*, April 12, 1921.

85. *Histories of the Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movements* (Deep Publications, Delhi 1974, Indian Reprint, originally published by Government of India Press, Delhi, 1925), p. 29.

86. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 221.

87. See Krishnadas, *Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi* (Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1951), p. 47.

88. See G. A. Natesan, *Speeches and Writings of M. K. Gandhi* (G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras, n.d. Fourth Edition), p. 586.

89. See *The Indian Annual Register*, Calcutta, 1922-23, p. 320. Also see

D. Gopalkrishnaiya (Comp.) *The Pilgrims March : Their Messages* (G. Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1921), p. 101.

90. See Algurai Shastri, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., p. 368.

91. See Subhash Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, op. cit., Part II, pp. 103 and 113.

92. See Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi : A Study in Revolution*, op. cit., p. 231. He writes about Gandhi's action, "To his immured lieutenants, the greatness of his conduct was not instantly apparant. He had cancelled the operation without even consulting them. Long letters from Motilal Nehru and Lajpat Rai led a chorus of protest. Motilal, after all, had persuaded Congress to entrust Swaraj into Gandhi's keeping. Lajpat Rai had seconded the resolution at Nagpur, and his name, in witness of unwavering faith, had headed the recent authority of tributes." Ashe's remarks are about the book *Mahatma Gandhi : the World's Greatest Man*, by Lala Lajpat Rai and others (N.L.P. Co., Bombay, 1922) cited in this work elsewhere.

93. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., pp. 236-7.

94. See *Gandhi Papers*, S. No. 7917, undated, Lajpat Rai's letter to the Members of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress (Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, New Delhi).

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid. Also see Subash Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle, Part II*, op. cit., p. 108.

97. Ibid. Also see P. D. Kaushik, *The Congress Ideology and Programme : 1920-47* (Allied Publishers P. Ltd., Bombay, 1964), p. 205.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid. Also quoted in Hari Dev Sharma, "The Non-cooperation Movement" in A. C. Guha (Ed.), *The Story of Indian Revolution* (Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1972) p. 150.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid.

104. *The Tribune*, November 18, 1923.

105. Ibid.

106. See *Indian National Congress*, op. cit., p. 493.

107. See Subash C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, op. cit., p. 121.

108. *The Tribune*, September 12, 1923.

109. Ibid., December 9, 1923.

110. Ibid.

111. Ibid.

112. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 276.

113. Ibid.

114. *The Tribune*, November 19, 1924.

115. Ibid., January 1, 1925.

116. See Algurai Shastri, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., p. 421.

117. *The Tribune*, November 30, 1924.

118. Ibid., December 3, 1924.

119. Ibid.

120. Ibid., December 5, 1924.

121. V. B. Kulkarni, *India and Pakistan : A Historical Survey of Hindu-Muslim Relations* (Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1973), pp. 210-11.

122. *The Tribune*, December 14, 1924. Also see *The Indian Review*, January 1925 for Lajpat Rai's letter to V. S. Srinivasa Sastri where writing on the Communal Representation Lajpat Rai observed, "The Problem of the day is Hindu-Muslim problem. You in the south are not affected by it and cannot therefore realise either its significance or its importance for upper India. For us it foreshadows every other question. In my humble judgement an advance towards Swaraj is being hampered by it, but a Swaraj is no Swaraj if it only leads to a civil war between the great communities of our country. I am afraid communal representation with special electorates is bound to lead to it. I will not be afraid even of that and may prefer it to existing dependence if I could be sure that the British government will not use this for the purpose of perpetuating our dependence. . . ."

123. See Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta, *An Advanced History of India* (Macmillan, New York, 1967), *Part III*, p. 987. Also see S. R. Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth (1885-1929)* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1965), p. 198.

124. *The Tribune*, December 14, 1924.

125. Ibid., December 17, 1924.

126. A. B. Purani (Recorded by), *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1954, First Series), pp. 64-6. Also see Keshavmurti, *Sri Aurobindo : The Hope of Man*, op. cit., p. 246.

## CHAPTER V

### Lajpat Rai and the Swarajists

Lajpat Rai was a great asset to the Swaraj Party even before he had formally become a member of it. Although he joined the party in 1926, he had started doing everything to strengthen it after his release from jail on August 16, 1923.<sup>1</sup> When the Special Session of the Indian National Congress was convened at Delhi to consider the question of Council entry, he was recuperating at Solan<sup>2</sup> but he exerted all his influence on the nationalist leaders to support the Swarajists. He was in favour of their Council entry programme. As regard its principles, he was not in agreement with the founder-members of the Swaraj party, i.e., C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru. The slogan of “uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction” did not appeal to him.<sup>3</sup> Still he helped the Swarajists in the election. Single-handed, he organised the election campaign for them in the Punjab, and through his efforts the party obtained notable victories.<sup>4</sup> When the Swarajists and Independents met at Delhi on February 1, 1924 for a common programme it was again he who helped the Swarajists “in their efforts to establish a united nationalist party and actually canvassed votes for them there”.<sup>5</sup> He advocated their cause before the British Labour Government on his subsequent visit to England in 1924 without officially being a member of the Swaraj Party, and also without being totally in favour of the party’s programme of obstruction.<sup>6</sup>

Lajpat Rai’s sympathy for the programme of the Swarajists was due partly to the failure of the non-cooperation movement. “The ruling bureaucracy”, he said, “is too resourceful for us and we are too much disunited and divided to make any kind of non-cooperation or obstruction sufficiently effective and cooperative . . . .” He was in favour of responsive

cooperation. As for the programme of obstruction he had his own reservations. If obstruction was resorted to in the legislature for throwing out the Budget, it was in conformity with the spirit of the constitution.<sup>9</sup> The legislature could force its way in only through this method. It could enable the legislature to have control over the executive. It was in this context that he appreciated the move of Pandit Motilal Nehru in rejecting the Finance Bill in the Central Legislative Assembly on March 18, 1925 and denounced M.A. Jinnah's stand.<sup>9</sup> But if obstruction placed one group in the Assembly in a bargaining position and another out of the House, Lajpat Rai would not accept it. He had reasons to believe that the hostile attitude of the Muslims towards the Swarajists in the Assembly was as a result of a bargain they had entered into with the bureaucracy.<sup>10</sup> The policy of British Government seemed to be in favour of alienating the Muslim members from the Swarajists.

Lajpat Rai's utterances before joining the Swaraj Party revealed that he would not sacrifice the interests of the Hindu community.<sup>11</sup> He opposed the policy of obstruction followed by the Swarajists mainly on this ground. He did not have any antipathy towards the Muslims; what he resented was their undue domination. "We are", he said, "prepared to embrace Muslims as brethren, but in no case, will we allow Muslim or any community to dominate over the other communities in politics."<sup>12</sup> The demands of the Muslims for dividing the provinces on the basis of Hindu and Mohammedan majorities looked to him too heavy a price to pay for Swaraj, he observed:

The Hindu Nationalists have now to make up their minds as to the line of policy they should follow in the future. It is not a question of driving the Mohammedans into the arms of the Government as some Mohammedan leaders are apt to point out to the Hindus as a result of the latter's refusal to concede the demands of the former. On the contrary, it is a case of the Government throwing itself into the arms of Muslim leaders to make the Swarajist policy innocuous.<sup>13</sup>

His relations with C.R. Das were strained on the latter's negotiating the Hindu-Muslim Pact with the Muslims of Bengal in 1923. The Pact had provided for:

1. Representation in the Legislative Council on the basis of population with separate electorates.
2. Representation to local bodies to be in proportion of 60 to 40 in every district—60 to the community which was in majority and 40 to the minority.
3. Fifty-five per cent of the Government posts to be reserved for Muslims.
4. No music to be allowed before mosques.
5. No interference with cow killing for religious sacrifices but cows to be killed in such a manner as not to wound the religious feelings of the Hindus.<sup>14</sup>

This controversial Pact offended Lajpat Rai to such an extent that his friendship with C. R. Das was never revived. In Lajpat Rai's view the action of C. R. Das was entirely uncalled for. At the Special Session of the Congress at Calcutta in September 1920, it had been decided to work out a national pact for the strengthening of Hindu-Muslim unity. Lajpat Rai and Dr. Ansari had been entrusted with this work and they had drawn up a pact with the advice of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The Swarajists were aware of it. But even before the publication of the National Pact, C. R. Das had propounded his own. Lajpat Rai viewed it as "an act of gross indiscipline on the part of the Bengal Swarajist leader".<sup>15</sup> According to Lajpat Rai, the Bengal Pact amounted to bartering away the interests of the majority community to the minority. While the Muslims did not want to shed even an iota of their communal interests, the Hindus seemed to want Swaraj at any cost.<sup>16</sup>

He also differed with the Swarajists on the issue of yarn franchise. In the Congress session held under the presidency of Gandhi at Belgaum in December, 1924, Lajpat Rai "made a stinging attack against the spinning franchise. He found several inconsistencies in the Khaddar programme and the spinning franchise and said no country in the world had



obtained freedom by such means.”<sup>17</sup> In *The People*, a weekly edited and founded by Lajpat Rai in Lahore on July 5, 1925, he wrote: “We respect and admire Mahatmaji for his single-mindedness, but we beg to differ from him most respectfully as to the spinning wheel being the panacea for all our ills.”<sup>18</sup>

With Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai had cordial relations. He differed with him only on some important issues like wholesale obstruction and boycott of Councils. This gap was widened when the spirit of responsive cooperation dawned on the Swaraj Party. In the middle of 1925, there was a change in the thinking of a large section of the Swarajists towards acceptance of office. Lajpat Rai was sympathetic to those in favour of responsive cooperation—“though he did not entirely agree with their views, particularly about acceptance of offices”.<sup>19</sup>

In the changed political atmosphere, Lajpat Rai wished to propose M. R. Jayakar’s name for the Presidentship of the forthcoming Congress session at Kanpur in 1925. He spoke to Jayakar on July 22, 1925,<sup>20</sup> who thankfully declined the offer “knowing that the intrigues in the Congress were too powerful and the matter depended entirely on Gandhi’s assistance and support as he was practically the Kingmaker”.<sup>21</sup> He himself was disgusted with politics in the Congress. He entirely agreed with Jayakar and wrote back to him saying that:

To be absolutely frank, I do not like the way in which things have been conducted all along. I sent my frank opinion to Gandhi. In reply I was told that he admitted the force of my view and its legality, but committed himself to nothing . . . . In my judgement it is better to re-elect Gandhi as President rather than have Gandhi through Mrs. Naidu.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately Mrs. Naidu was elected Congress President.

Lajpat Rai’s relations with Motilal Nehru got strained on account of his defending the revolt of the Responsivists like Jayakar and Kelkar. In October 1925, Tambe joined the Governor’s Executive Council in C. P. His appointment was denounced by Motilal Nehru who was then President of the Swaraj Party. Jayakar and Kelkar also condemned Tambe’s

action, but they wanted clear directives on the acceptance of offices and responsive cooperation. They said that Vithalbhai Patel's acceptance of the Speakership of the Legislative Assembly and Motilal Nehru's membership of the Sken Committee were similar to Tambe's joining the Executive Council. In their opinion the responsive cooperation had been ushered in by Patel and Nehru long before Tambe, if not as a matter of principle, at least through deeds. They decided to quit the membership of the Party executive after the Nagpur meet. Motilal Nehru rushed to Bombay from Nagpur to tackle the Responsivists and for 'amputting the diseased limb from the body'.<sup>23</sup>

Supporting the stand of Jayakar and Kelkar, Lajpat Rai laid the blame for the wrangle on Motilal Nehru.

For Pandit Motilal to waive the banner of the mailed fist even after everything had been smoothly done at the meeting of the Executive Committee at Nagpur makes confusion worse confounded. We wish the Pandit had exercised more restraint. Far be it from us to read him a sermon. He knows his business and may be expected to give the proper lead to his flock but we cannot help remarking that this is hardly the time to lose temper and become angry.

He further remarked:

The two wings of the Party are busy fighting each other. Messrs Jayakar and Kelkar have resigned their seats on the Party executive. In view of Motilalji's recent utterances perhaps that was the only dignified course left to them. The Party has split over responsive cooperation.<sup>24</sup>

His contention was that cooperation or opposition according to circumstances was the right course and was within the framework of the principles laid down by the Swaraj Party. In his opinion even Motilal Nehru could not do otherwise. That was the only course left open to the Swarajists since "wrecking councils from within through uniform obstruction" had been abandoned long ago.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, he discounted the talk of Civil Disobedience for achieving the goal of Swaraj. This, he thought was, not possible. The real need was to pursue the programme at

hand vigorously through Councils.<sup>26</sup> His disapproval of Civil Disobedience was due to one more factor—the communal imbalance in the country. There were constant rumours in Bombay and Madras about the distribution of Government posts among the Hindus and the Muslims in proportion to their numerical strength. It was a vicious situation. If the Swarajists were not in a mood to stay within the Council chambers there were all possibilities of the reactionary elements taking advantage of their absence for communal ends. Lajpat Rai, therefore, suggested:

At present, while disintegration and demoralisation reigns supreme, the immediate work before us is to do something that will put heart into the people. We beg of the Swarajist leaders to take this aspect of the question into consideration. There is time for every blessed thing and this is not a time to harp upon Civil Disobedience.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, the Responsivists were voicing their desire to have a new party. Jayakar was being pursued by friends to form a new party. Lajpat Rai too was somewhat inclined towards this new move.<sup>28</sup> Side by side he was honestly trying for unity in the Swaraj Party. He believed that there were hardly any differences between the two contending factions, one led by Motilal Nehru and the other by Jayakar and Kelkar, on matters of policies. In his opinion the only difference rested on the issue of freedom of expression and agitation within the party.<sup>29</sup>

He made an earnest request to Motilal Nehru to make adjustments in order to avert a further split. Actually there was lack of discipline in the Swaraj Party from its very inception. Therefore, in Lajpat Rai's view, there was no sense in making a fetish of it. The fear of a new party of the secessionist Swarajists brought Motilal Nehru to terms. A conference of responsive cooperators and the supporters of the old line was convened at Bombay on December 4, 1925, on the initiative of Motilal Nehru. Lajpat Rai and Dr. Moonje helped the Conference with their wise counsel. The split was averted, though temporarily, with a reapproachment. All the

controversies were set at rest but only to revive at the Kanpur Congress.<sup>30</sup>

### In the Central Assembly

Meanwhile, Lajpat Rai decided to join the Central Legislative Assembly.<sup>31</sup> At one time he along with Gandhi had condemned the council programme and the work in the Assembly as "infructuous and as a weary waste of National effort and energy".<sup>32</sup> But much water had flown down the Ganges since then. There were strong winds of responsiveness in the country. Lajpat Rai himself had taken up the cause of responsiveness and his decision to contest for the Assembly was quite in conformity with his views.<sup>33</sup> A seat was vacated for him by Raizada Hans Raj who requested his voters to elect Lajpat Rai unanimously as they had elected him. He also said that Lajpat Rai's election to the Assembly would prove him to be the best friend and supporter of Motilal Nehru.<sup>34</sup> His nomination papers were filed from Jullundur. He was duly elected to the Assembly on December 8, 1925.<sup>35</sup>

Before taking his seat in the Assembly, Lajpat Rai accompanied Motilal Nehru in a discussion with Lord Reading on the South African question. Pattabhi Sitaramayya wrote:

The cult of Responsive cooperation was indeed definitely in the air by the end of 1925. . . . Pandit Motilal Nehru had crossed the threshold of the Viceregal Lodge in the 2nd week of January (1926) with, of course, the permission of the Executive of the party. With him were five other leaders including Lalaji, and the purpose of the visit was to discuss the South African question.<sup>36</sup>

Lajpat Rai joined the Assembly as an independent. Till then he was not a member of the Swaraj Party. He believed that since he was a Congressman he was a Swarajist too.<sup>37</sup> After his election he attended the Kanpur Congress held in the last week of December, 1925. This Congress shattered the hopes of unity between the warring camps of the Swarajists.<sup>38</sup> The Congress considered the programme of walkout from the Assembly and to do constructive work in the rural areas, so as to win larger

support of the voters for the Swarajist Party in the next election. Lajpat Rai did not agree to this. He was in favour of the responsivists, but under the persuasion of his Punjabi supporters and his own inclination to patch up differences with Motilal Nehru, he supported the programme of walkout. On Lajpat Rai's insistence it was agreed upon that the Congress members in the Assembly and in the Council of State should stage walkouts after voting against the Finance Bill. Till then the members should work in accordance with the rules of the Party. If need be, a special committee should instruct the members for their presence in the Legislature. In a nutshell, they agreed that the main session of the Assembly should not be abandoned. Lajpat Rai supported Motilal Nehru on this resolution,<sup>39</sup> and stood with him in support of the Swarajist policy as against the Responsivists.<sup>40</sup>

He took the oath in the Assembly on January 21, 1926<sup>41</sup> and on the invitation of Motilal Nehru joined the Swaraj Party on January 25, 1926. But that did not mean a complete surrender of his individuality and principles. As he wrote:

I joined the Swaraj Party in January 1926 after having made my position clear in the letter that I addressed at the time to Pandit Motilal Nehru . . . . I distinctly said in that letter that I believed in the Council work and was opposed to wholesale obstruction and to boycott of Council.<sup>42</sup>

Lajpat Rai, as the Deputy Leader of the Swaraj Party,<sup>43</sup> enthusiastically participated in the deliberations of the Central Legislative Assembly and "made his mark as a fearless fighter for the national cause on the floor of the Assembly".<sup>44</sup>

On March 6 and 7, 1926, the A.I.C.C. met at Delhi. Altering the Kanpur decision, it passed the resolution calling on Swarajists to withdraw from the Assembly,<sup>45</sup> prior to their rejection of the Finance Bill. To Lajpat Rai it was nothing short of amending the Kanpur resolution. Lajpat Rai raised a point of order that the A.I.C.C. was not empowered to alter or to amend the resolution passed in the open session. His objection was accepted but the supporters to the amendment contented that the Kanpur resolution only fixed the last day

for the walkout and that the walkout before that time was not against the resolution. Lajpat Rai had to bow before the majority decision.<sup>46</sup> He was not in favour of Council walk-outs as he had already shown this after joining the Assembly.<sup>47</sup> But Motilal Nehru fully supported the walkout programme. On March 8, 1926 he walked out of the Assembly along with other leaders of the Swaraj Party.<sup>48</sup>

The Responsivists held a conference of Independents and the Nationalists in Bombay on April 3, 1926. As a result, the Indian National Party was formed. This party stood for Swaraj of the Dominion type through peaceful and legitimate means, with liberty to cooperate with the government in the legislatures.<sup>49</sup> Pandit Motilal Nehru vehemently criticised the new party as a "conglomerate in the first stage of geological formation".<sup>50</sup> Lajpat Rai too did not view it with favour.<sup>51</sup>

He arrived at Sabarmati to attempt a reunion of the two wings of the Swaraj Party on April 20, 1926.<sup>52</sup> Those present were Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Kelkar, Jayakar, Dr. Moonje, Motilal Nehru and Gandhi. Gandhi remained a silent observer throughout. The result was the Sabarmati Pact, which conceded Responsivists' demand for the acceptance of offices, but the Pact was shortlived.<sup>53</sup> In Ahmedabad Congress session on May 5, 1926, the failure for the reunion was confirmed for good.<sup>54</sup>

### **Swarajist No More**

Lajpat Rai's role as a mediator between the Swaraj Party and the Indian National Congress was beset with inherent difficulties from the beginning. He owed allegiance to the Congress mandate in principle, but he tried to work out a compromise with the Swaraj Party on the issue of Council entry. This kind of a compromise might be highly desirable but it could not survive major ideological clashes.

Lajpat Rai resigned his membership of the Swarajist Party<sup>55</sup> on August 24, 1926 as differences grew between him and Pt. Motilal Nehru on various issues connected with the work in the Assembly. The Congress historian Pattabhi Sitaramayya writes:

Lalaji considered the Swarajists policy of walk-out as distinctly harmful to the interests of the Hindus. He was also in favour of confirming the Sabarmati Pact on the question of the acceptance of office. The controversy that ensued between him and Motilalji was vehement and very often personal. . . . Col. Wedgwood was in communication with Lalaji, and his influence was visible in Lalaji's plumping for responsive cooperation.<sup>56</sup>

After his resignation from the party, he along with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya founded the Independent Congress Party.<sup>57</sup> Pt. Malaviya was elected as President and Lajpat Rai as General Secretary of this new party on September 12, 1926.<sup>58</sup> The Independent Congress Party fought the 1926 elections for the Assembly in opposition to the Swaraj Party.<sup>59</sup> It "won an astounding success against the Congress in U.P. and the Punjab. Lajpat Rai himself was elected to the Central Assembly from two constituencies with comfortable majorities against the Congress candidates."<sup>60</sup>

Earlier Lajpat Rai explained the reasons of his break-up with the Swaraj Party at an election meeting held at Lucknow on September 25, 1926.<sup>61</sup> He said:

I joined the Swaraj Party in the hope that I would be able to pull on with them, but soon after I found that I was mistaken . . . . I would have gladly withdrawn from any kind of contest with the Swaraj Party had my sense of duty to the country allowed me to do so. I feel that such a conduct at the present juncture would be cowardly. I owe it to myself and the country to vindicate the principles for what I stand.<sup>62</sup>

And those principles had one common theme—legitimate Hindu interests. Throughout his membership of the Swaraj Party he remained closely associated with the Hindu Mahasabha activities. On December 28, 1924, Lajpat Rai attended the Hindu Mahasabha session at Belgaum.<sup>63</sup> In April 1925, he presided over the annual session of the Hindu Mahasabha convened in Calcutta.<sup>64</sup> In his Presidential Address at the session, Lajpat Rai said:

I want to emphasise on this occasion that our object is to further love and not hatred. . . . So far we have no quarrel with those who are not of our faith. But we cannot forget that every one is not of that opinion or of that mind, and that, goaded by self-interests either individually or communally, other people and other communities do sometimes attack us unjustly. It is our duty to take such steps against those attacks as may be necessary for our protection, both individually and communally. In this respect nothing can guide us better than the *Bhagwad-Gita*. . . . We cannot afford to be so weak and imbecile as to allow or encourage others to crush us nor can we be obsessed by false ideas of *Ahimsa* but at our peril. *Ahimsa* is the highest religion but there is no religion higher than truth. *Ahimsa* and truth must be reconciled, in fact in essence they are one and the same.<sup>65</sup>

On December 3 and 4, 1925 Lajpat Rai presided over the Bombay Hindu Conference.<sup>66</sup> His view was that the policy of obstruction was harmful to the Hindus. The reasons which he advanced were quite logical. His rationale cannot be explained better than in his own words:

Non-cooperation or wholesale obstruction has for the present been frustrated on account of the Muslim community. It could only be practicable if the country supported it unitedly. The Muslims never supported the movement wholeheartedly, and whatever support these principles received from a section of the Muslim community has for the present vanished. In the circumstances the policy of non-cooperation or obstruction by one community only, has no chance of success.<sup>67</sup>

The Muslim community claimed certain rights for itself, the acceptance of which, in Lajpat Rai's views, would reduce the Hindu community to a position of subordination, if not immediately, at least in the future. In his judgement this was not in the interests of the country at large. But he did not doubt the integrity of the Muslims. As he said:



I think we may safely presume that they are as patriotic as we are. . . . They find that cooperation with the Government gives them better chance of success than cooperation with the Hindus. Consequently they have thrown their lot with the Government and the Government is trying its level best to satisfy them in every possible way. The joint strategy of the Government and the Muslims only leads to the isolation of the Hindus.<sup>68</sup>

According to Lajpat Rai, there were some good men among the Hindus who thought that the "reconversion of the whole Muslim community and the establishment of an all-prevailing, all-absorbing Hindu policy was not only desirable but feasible".<sup>69</sup> But this would be "impossible" in his opinion. The Swaraj Party was likewise incapable of judging the communal question objectively. Lajpat Rai belonged to a third party which thought that nationalism was not inconsistent with justice to the Hindu community and that unity could not be purchased at the cost of Hindu rights.<sup>70</sup>

Thus Lajpat Rai's suggestion was not of a "counter alliance with the Government", but abandoning the policy of non-cooperation within the legislature. To him the three-stage policy of the Swaraj Party, viz., non-cooperation . . . cooperation . . . non-cooperation was sheer mockery. Neither complete cooperation nor boycott could be followed. Even an admixture of two, i.e., cooperation and boycott was disastrous to India as well as to the Hindus."<sup>71</sup> He reasoned:

The Swaraj Party consists of many Hindus and so does the Congress. At the present moment, in the words of Pandit Motilal Nehru, there is only a sprinkling of Muslims in the Congress. The great bulk of the Muslim community is wholeheartedly cooperating.

And then came his most pertinent query: "The question that troubles me is this: What would be the position of the Hindus after 10 or 20 years hereafter if the present alliance of the Government and the Muslim continue and the Hindus continue to allow themselves to be influenced by the mentality of cooperation and boycott? In my judgement there will be

only one result of this policy, viz., that the Hindus will come to occupy a position of inferiority and subordination.”<sup>72</sup>

The Swarajists were not alarmed by such developments but Lajpat Rai was. For this reason he did not want the advocates for the Hindu Raj in the legislative council. He prevailed over the Delhi session of the Hindu Mahasabha not to set up any candidate in the Election. He was against the conversion of the Hindu Mahasabha into a political body.<sup>73</sup> He desired to see genuine nationalists and patriotic Hindus there for the protection of Hindu interests.<sup>74</sup> His own experience in the Punjab was that the Majority of the Muslims gave the Hindu minority a step-motherly treatment, while the same Muslim minority in the Hindu predominant provinces was accorded a position of equality. So a change in nationalistic outlook was necessary.

I have been an extremist and almost a revolutionary in politics all my life even since I reached the year of probation. When I say that the time has come for the Hindus to change their mentality I speak with the voice of experience.<sup>75</sup>

He crossed swords with his Swarajist opponents who publicised that Lajpat Rai had been won over by the Government. He stated:

My detractors say or insinuate that the Government has won me over. This is an unadulterated lie and an absolutely mendacious concoction. There can never be an understanding of a compromising nature between me and the Government. I am, I have been, and I shall remain to my last breath an uncompromising opponent of a foreign Government. . . . I want freedom for my country, but I must be sure that I get that freedom without losing my status as a Hindu. I do not to change masters.<sup>76</sup>

His estimate of the Swaraj Party was that there was complete lack of balanced judgement, policy and action in it. It lacked the qualities of “prudence and statecraft in the Council Chamber”. Several opportunities of good compromises had been thrown away. He believed that right compromise at the

right moment was the soul of politics.<sup>77</sup> In the internal policy of the party there was too much emphasis on discipline. Discipline was good as a means but not as an end in itself. The debit and the credit side of the Swaraj Party were described by Lajpat Rai in these words:

The Swaraj Party acted instinctively rightly when they abandoned the triple boycott in favour of the Council entry. They acted rightly when they decided to accept membership of committees and presidentship of councils. In the name of discipline the Swaraj Party has lopped off and amputated their healthy limbs, limbs that stood with them in storms and stress.<sup>78</sup>

This shows an awareness of the political realities on the part of Lajpat Rai during his close association with the Swarajists. He worked with them as long as he agreed with their political programme. But he felt free to differ with them on national issue of crucial significance like Council boycott and communal representation. Altogether, Lajpat Rai's career as a Swarajist would show the curious mixture he was. He was a combination of a realism and idealism, of revivalism and secularism.

## Notes

1. See Algrai Shastri, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., p. 397.
2. Ibid., p. 396
3. Ibid., pp. 397-8
4. See Ram Nath Suman, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., p. 174.
5. *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 316.
6. Ibid. Also see *The Indian Annual Register*, 1924, Vol., I. pp. 74 and 703.
7. Ibid., p. 231.
8. Ibid., p. 232.
9. Ibid., p. 234. Jinnah as leader of the Independents did not vote with the Swarajist on the ground that refusing supplies and rejecting Finance Bill was destroying the constitution, with the result that the Finance Bill was passed.

10. Ibid., p. 235. See also Notes on p. 483(5) Saiyid Raza Ali moved a resolution regarding recruitment of Muslim candidates to public services. Sir Alexander Muddiamn, Home Member, made an announcement in this regard in the Council of State on March 2, 1925, for reserving one third of the services for minorities.

11. See Daniel Argov, op. cit., p. 174.

12. *The Hindu*, December 10, 1925.

13. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 235.

14. See *The Indian Annual Register*, 1924, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 63.

15. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 317.

16. Ibid., pp. 318-19.

17. *The Times of India*, December 25, 1924, quoted in M. R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life, Vol. I*, op. cit., pp. 519-20.

18. *The People*, August 9, 1925.

19. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. I*, op. cit., p. 1.

20. M. R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life, Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 592.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., p. 593.

23. Ibid., pp. 642-70, "Tambe's Appointment to Cawnpore-Congress."

24. Ibid., p. 677. Also see *The People*, November 15, 1925.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., p. 678

27. *The People*, November 22, 1925.

28. See M. R. Jayakar, op. cit., pp. 701-2. Lajpat Rai wrote to Jayakar "I shall be happy to have a confidential talk with you on the present political situation when I am next in Bombay. Till then, I cannot do more than I am doing at present through my Weekly."

29. Ibid., p. 702.

30. Ibid., pp. 709-10

31. See Ram Nath Suman, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., p. 186.

32. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I*, op. cit., p. 310.

33. Zacharias had taken a different view. He wrote: Lajpat Rai tamely entered the Legislative Assembly. . . after previous fierce opposition to such watering down of Non-cooperation." See H. C. E. Zacharias, *Rena-scent India*, op. cit., p. 240.

34. See Ram Nath Suman *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., p. 186.

35. See *The People*, December 25, 1925. On Lajpat Rai's election to the Central Legislative Assembly, Col. Josiah Wedgwood cabled to Lajpat Rai, "Congratulate you and India."

36. *The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I*, op. cit., p. 299.

37. See Ram Nath Suman, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., p. 187.

38. See M. R. Jayakar, op. cit., p. 723-31.

39. See Algurai Shastri, op. cit., p. 442.

40. See Subhas C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle, Part. II*, op. cit., p. 170.

41. See Gordhanbhai Patel, *Vithalbhai Patel: Life and Times* (Bombay, 1950), Vol. II, p. 662.
42. For the text of Lajpat Rai's letter to Pt. Motilal Nehru see *The Indian Quarterly Register*, Vol. II, July-December, 1926, p. 60.
43. See Subhas C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, op. cit., p. 169.
44. T. V. Parvate, *Makers of Modern India* (University Publishers, Jullundur, 1964), p. 69.
45. But Pattabhi Sitaramayya wrote : "Delhi declared once again in favour of determined resistance and obstruction to every activity, Governmental or other that may impede the Nation's progress towards Swaraj. In particular, Congressmen in the Legislatures shall refuse to accept offices in the gift of the Government, until, in the opinion of the Congress a satisfactory response is made by the Government". op. cit., p. 299.
46. Algurai Shastri, pp. 442-3.
47. See Suman, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., p. 189. Also see *The People*, January 17, 1926.
48. See *The People*, March 14, 1926
49. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 300.
50. Ibid.
51. See *The People*, April 4, 1926.
52. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 300
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid. p. 301.
55. See A. K. Majumdar, *Advent of Independence* (Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1963), p. 97.
56. *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 303
57. See Subhas C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle, Part II*, op. cit., pp. 170-1. Also see D. P. Mishra, *Living An Era*, Vol. I, *India's March To Freedom* (Vikas, Delhi, 1975), p. 92.
58. *The Tribune*, September 14, 1927.
59. See Ram Nath Suman, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., p. 176. Also C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Munity*, op. cit., p. 107.
60. V. C. Joshi, *Lajpat Rai : Writings and Speeches*, Vol. I. op. cit., p. lix.
61. Ibid., Vol., II. p. 316.
62. Ibid., p. 317.
63. See Indra Prakash, *Hindu Mahasabha : Its Contribution to Indian Politics*, op. cit., p. 23.
64. *The Indian Review*, April 1925.
65. See M. R. Jayakar, Vol. II., op. cit., p. 713.
66. *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 317-18.
67. Ibid., p. 318.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid., p. 318-19.

71. Ibid., p. 319.
72. Ibid.
73. *The People*, March 21, 1926
74. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. II.*, op. cit., p. 320
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid, p. 321.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Last Phase (1926-28)

Events followed in quick succession during 1926-28. Lajpat Rai severed his connections from the Swaraj Party August 24, 1926. This he did on return from Geneva where he had gone in June 1926 to attend the Eighth International Labour Conference and where he championed the cause of the working classes of India, Asia and Africa.<sup>1</sup> Along with Malaviya, he formed the Independent Congress or the Nationalist Party. This came as a shock to Jawaharlal Nehru who was then the Secretary of the All India Congress Committee.<sup>2</sup> As Nehru said:

The new Nationalist Party represented a more moderate outlook, and was definitely more to the right than was the Swaraj Party. It was also wholly a Hindu party working in close cooperation with the Hindu Mahasabha. Pandit Malaviya's leadership of it was easy to understand, for it represented as nearly as a possible his own public attitude.<sup>3</sup>

But Jawaharlal Nehru was baffled at Lajpat Rai's step.

It is not easy to understand Lajpat Rai's adherence to this new party, though his inclination was also somewhat to the right as well as towards a more communal orientation. I had met Lalaji in Geneva that summer, and from our talks I had not gathered that he contemplated taking up an aggressive attitude against the Congress Party. How this happened I have still no idea.<sup>4</sup>

The Hindu-Muslim relations became the central issue. Undoubtedly, Lajpat Rai's support to the Nationalist Party

was to help organise the Hindus and instil in them a spirit of unity. But this was termed as "a veiled attempt to pursue the policies of the Hindu Mahasabha in the name of the Congress".<sup>5</sup> Even Gandhiji said: "Lalaji sees no escape from communalism, Panditji (Malaviya) cannot brook even the thought of it. I must hold myself in reserve till the storm is over."<sup>6</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru held the view that Lajpat Rai was political in his approach.<sup>7</sup>

As hinted earlier, the Independent Congress Party gained many notable victories in the Punjab and U.P. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: "Malaviyaji and Lala Lajpat Rai made a powerful combination so far as the Hindu electorate was concerned and Lalaji had great influence in the Punjab, the storm centre of communalism."<sup>8</sup>

### **In the Central Assembly**

Lajpat Rai was successfully returned to the Central Legislative Assembly from two constituencies. Jinnah congratulated Lajpat Rai telegraphically: "was waiting for result of your contest. Glad (at) your success. Trust we shall work together (for the) common good (of) both the communities."<sup>9</sup>

In spite of his differences with the Swarajist Party, he was one of those who proposed the name of V.J. Patel for the Speakership of the Central Legislative Assembly on January 20, 1927.<sup>10</sup> He regularly intervened in the Legislative Assembly debates. Speaking on the resolution demanding the release of political detenus in Bengal on February 3, 1927, Lajpat Rai told the British rulers that "All these arguments and speeches of ours will not convince you of the truth nor shall we on the other side, be convinced by your arguments. For us, it is a question of fundamental rights. We believe you have no right to keep these laws on the statute-book, and that you are doing it simply for the supposed safety of your domination, of your imperialism."<sup>11</sup>

During the discussion on the Railway Budget in the Assembly on February 27, he said that the Railway administration in India was not being carried on in the best interests of the country. The Indian labour employed in the Railways was not adequately paid. Even the other categories of the staff received



smaller salaries than the Englishmen or Anglo-Indians employed in Indian Railways for similar kind of work and similar duties. He strongly put forward the demand for the inclusion of an Indian member in the Railway Board. Without such a member the Board would not be able to appreciate the needs of the Indian travellers or merchants in the right perspective. He also criticised the Railway Department for causing undeserved humiliation to Indians.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile the Congress Working Committee met at Delhi on March 21, 1927 and discussed the Muslim proposal regarding the joint electorate. The Hindu members of the Assembly under<sup>13</sup> Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya considered these proposals on March 23, 1927 and "laid down sound principles as the basis for discussion".<sup>14</sup> But communal tension prevailed as strongly as ever. The Hindu-Muslim riots in Lahore, in the first week of May, 1927 and elsewhere in the country were quite shocking. The A.I.C.C.<sup>15</sup> met in Bombay on May 15 and 16, 1927<sup>16</sup> under the shadow of these riots. At this time Gandhi was seriously ill and the A.I.C.C. meeting expressed its wishes for the speedy recovery of Gandhi. Disgusted with the country's state of affairs Lajpat Rai sailed for Europe.<sup>17</sup> In the words of Pattabhi Sitaramayya,

his departure was adversely commented upon. The previous year also, he had left India and occasioned adverse criticism. To his credit, however, it must be noted that when Shraddhanand was murdered, he was in Calcutta on his way to Gauhati but returned to the Punjab without attending the Congress. We mention these things in order to show that the political atmosphere was full of bickerings.<sup>18</sup>

Miss Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*<sup>19</sup> appeared in May 1927 when Lajpat Rai was in London. The book attacked Indians for their moral depravity. It was a very biased work and Gandhi could not help calling it a "drain inspector's report". Unable to pocket this insult to Indian character, Lajpat Rai decided to write a befitting reply to Miss Mayo's work. The result was *Unhappy India* which was published in January 1928.<sup>20</sup>

On August 23, 1927, Lajpat Rai spoke in the Central Legislative Assembly on the repealing of the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 1908.<sup>21</sup> He criticised the Government saying:

... You are pursuing what I would call a cowardly process which no respectable and civilised Government ought to pursue. We warn you, therefore, in your own interests; we want you to show yourself a brave Government, a civilised Government, depending upon the ordinary laws of the country and not an exceptional legislation of this kind to maintain peace and public order in this country.<sup>22</sup>

Further chastising the foreign Government, he said:

If you really cannot maintain peace and public order under the ordinary laws of the land, then you condemn yourself; you condemn yourself very severely of your own incapacity and your unfitness to govern. This Act is not needed.<sup>23</sup>

After a few days, in protest against the government's adamant attitude about the Gold Standard and the Reserve Bank of India Bill (1927)<sup>24</sup> Lajpat Rai, as the leader of the Nationalist (or Independent) Party, walked out of the Central Legislative Assembly along with the Congress Party on September 8, 1927.<sup>25</sup>

When the Criminal Law Amending Bill (1927) was discussed in the Central Legislative Assembly for providing a new section in Chapter XV of the Indian Penal Code for the punishment of those involved in insulting religions and fomenting religious hatred among the various communities, Lajpat Rai gave his wholehearted support to the measure.<sup>26</sup> Although he did not accept the offer to serve on the Select Committee for this Bill and suggested Pandit Malaviya's name in his place,<sup>27</sup> he condemned the indiscreet use of the freedom of religious propaganda. In the course of his speech on September 5, he recalled his own remarks on the issue as published in *The People* of May 29, 1927,<sup>28</sup> where he had criticised publications like *Rangila Rasul*<sup>29</sup> and had held that "of all religious propaganda, disrespectful criticism of the founders of religious systems is the most offensive and objectionable".<sup>30</sup> He further

said that "the Hindu community as such will not object to any provision being made in the criminal law of the land which would make the intentional insult of religion or the intentional insult of high religious personages an offence".<sup>31</sup>

A Unity Conference was to be held at Calcutta on October 27, 1927.<sup>32</sup> The President of the Indian National Congress, Mr. Srinivas Iyengar, who later inaugurated the Conference sent a telegram to Lala Lajpat Rai requesting him to attend this conference with the Congress Working Committee. Lajpat Rai declined saying:

As long as murderous assaults are going on, to talk of peace and unity without taking a step to put a stop to such murderous assaults and to utterances which lead to such assaults, is to my humble understanding putting the cart before the horse. Even now the Ali Brothers continue to indulge in threatening speeches in the spitfire way. I have therefore made up my mind not to take part in any of the conference unless I am convinced that the convenors of such conferences and the leaders thereof have taken enough steps to establish an atmosphere of non-violence.<sup>33</sup>

### Simon Commission

Meanwhile, the British Government was preparing to appoint a statutory commission for examining the question of constitutional reforms in India. Eventually, an All White Statutory commission, under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon, was appointed by Royal Warrant of November 26, 1927.<sup>34</sup> The composition of the Commission which did not include a single Indian caused widespread discontent in the country. A wave of anger swept the Indian people. After the non-cooperation movement of 1920-21, the appointment of the Simon Commission in 1927 was the only event that made the whole nation politically alive.<sup>35</sup> All nationalist parties, unmindful of their intra-party differences, responded to the call of amity and unity. An all party meeting was convened in Allahabad under the presidentship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. This meeting took a firm decision on December 11, 1927 to boycott the Simon Commission.<sup>36</sup> The Indian Liberals who met

at Allahabad under the presidentship of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, considered "the exclusion of Indians a deliberate insult to the people of India"<sup>37</sup> and took a similar decision.

Lajpat Rai in his timely study of the "Political Situation"<sup>38</sup> expressed the opinion that since Indians could not hope to get anything worthwhile for the cause of their country's freedom from any of the three British political parties, viz., Conservative, Liberal and Labour, the immediate programme of action was to boycott the Simon Commission. He held that the Conservatives and the Liberals had no interest in India's liberation because of their sworn imperialism. To this category belonged the Labour Party as well, because Ramsay Macdonald as leader of the Labour opposition had supported the resolution on the appointment of the Simon Commission in the House of Commons. As such considered Ramsay Macdonald and his associates in the Labour Party as imitation socialists full of religious and social bias.<sup>39</sup>

About the boycott of Simon Commission, Lajpat Rai was in complete agreement with the views expressed by Col. Wedgwood. Wedgwood wrote to Lajpat Rai: "Petitioning for little scraps of liberty is a dirty business, and there has been too much of it. You lose your self-respect and you will get despised. There is no need to stand in the witness box and be cross-examined by persons of no great importance who have not before shown any interest in your views or feelings." Lajpat Rai believed that the boycott was neither going to injure the interests of the country in any way nor was it harmful to Hindu or Muslim interests.<sup>40</sup> Explaining the futility of evidence before the Commission Lajpat Rai further asserted:

It is not a judicial enquiry that we want. We have no dispute with the Government which can be settled on the basis of evidence. Our claim is based on natural rights and the onus of proving that we are not entitled to those rights is on our opponents. Those who desire to appear as witnesses before the Statutory Commission, can only help the bureaucracy in discharging that onus in the absence of Indian members on the Commission, they cannot help India.<sup>41</sup>

He differed from those Indian legislators who proposed to abstain from the legislatures in order to boycott the Commission without resigning their membership. He believed that: "In the Assembly and the Councils we cannot do much positive good, but we can prevent a great deal of mischief. . . ." <sup>42</sup> And he added: "Several times during this year the government won victories over us because of the absence of our members. In my humble judgement, members who make light of their duty in this respect, do a great wrong to their constituents." <sup>43</sup>

He had similarly little faith in the practicability of "non-payment of taxes" and the "boycott of British goods" as proposed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, if the Government refused to grant responsible government to Indians by January 1930. <sup>44</sup> He stressed the need for a practical approach to politics and for a united effort in pursuing a policy of "discriminate obstruction" as against total obstruction. Lajpat Rai further observed, ". . . All human institutions are imperfect. A Swaraj Government will by no means be a perfect Government. In fact the real struggle for human emancipation will start after the Swaraj Government has been established. . . ." <sup>45</sup>

### **In the Central Assembly**

The appointment of the Simon Commission enagaged the attention of the Central Legislative Assembly on February 16, 1928. <sup>46</sup> Various Indian members of the Assembly tabled resolutions on the Commission. Among them were M.K. Acharya, M. R. Jayakar and Gaya Prasad Singh. But Gaya Prasad was absent when he was called upon to move his resolution. By that time most of the non-official members of the Assembly had made up their mind that the only resolution on the issue be submitted by Lala Lajpat Rai. Jayakar and Acharya, therefore, did not move their resolution. <sup>47</sup> Lala Laipat Rai's resolution read:

This Assembly recommends to the Governor-General in Council to inform His Majesty's Government that the present constitution and scheme of the Statutory Commission are wholly unacceptable to this House and that

this House will therefore have nothing to do with the Commission at any stage and in any form.<sup>48</sup>

Since there were many amendments to this resolution, almos in a similar tone, the Speaker of the Assembly, Vithalbhai Patel sorted out one amendment of Sir Zulfiquar Ali Khan. Then followed the discussion on the issue.<sup>49</sup> Along with Lajpat Rai and Zulfiquar Ali Khan many others participated in the historic debate. Among those who were in favour of cooperating with the Commission were Sardar Mohammed Nawaz Khan, J. Crerar, Sir Darcy Lindsay, Mian Mohammed Shah Nawaz, M. C. Rajah, K. C. Roy, Bhupendra Nath Mitra, Sir Hari Singh Gaur, Sir Basil Blackett, Col. Gidney, Dr. Suhrawardy, Col. Crawford and Rev. Chatterjee. Those who with slight differences in their views were against the Commission included Srinivasa Iyengar, Jayakar, Jinnah, Goswami, Motilal Nehru, Purushottamdas Thakurdas, Fazal Ibrahim, Rahimtulla, Ranga Iyer and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya.<sup>50</sup>

The debate on the issue lasted for full two days. During the course of his reply to the debate, Lajpat Rai made it clear that his resolution "does not involve any general scheme of non-cooperation. All the discussion directed against it on that ground, is absolutely beside the point."<sup>51</sup> He further said: "I quite understand the view which the chair took that it simply confines itself to non-cooperating with the Commission as it is constituted today, and nothing else and nothing further."<sup>52</sup> He made an appeal to the Muslims and the Depressed classes not to cooperate with the work of the Commission in any manner. Concluding his speech, Lajpat Rai declared to the Indian members of the House, "that every vote against my proposition is a vote for the continuance of bondage and every vote in favour of my proposition is a vote for freedom. The choice lies between Swaraj and bondage. . . ."<sup>53</sup>

Lajpat Rai's resolution was carried.<sup>54</sup> The attempts made by the Government to win Jayakar and Jinnah over to their side failed. In the words of Gordhanbhai I. Patel:

All the wooing of Jayakar and Jinnah was of no avail, and they voted for Lalaji's Resolution as against Zulfiquar Ali Khan's. Vithalbhai looked upon them, as indeed

they were, as two alternative proposals and put Lalaji's proposal to the vote first. He intimated that if it was carried the other one would drop automatically. The division showed 68 Ayes and 62 Noes, and the motion was adopted with cries of 'Bande Mataram'. The result so stunned Sir Basil that he fell down in his seat.<sup>55</sup>

After a month, while participating in the general debate on the Indian Finance Bill, Lajpat Rai, warned the Government about the deteriorating economic condition of the Indian masses. India, it would be recalled, witnessed an unusual economic crisis during 1927-28 as a part of the world-wide economic depression. There were also many instances of industrial unrest, and agrarian agitations.<sup>56</sup> He accused the administration of neglecting the interests of the Indian agriculturists, the unemployed, the depressed classess and the Indian taxpayers. The government, he said, was

sowing the seeds of Bolshevism. I am not particularly enamoured of Bolshevism, nor am I particularly afraid of it, but I tell you honestly with the best of motives . . . that if you go on like this for a number of years, not even the height of the Himalayas can prevent the entry of Bolshevism into the plains of India.<sup>57</sup>

The Public Safety (Removal From India) Bill was fiercely criticised by Lajpat Rai.<sup>58</sup> He pointed out that the Bill was not aimed at curbing and controlling the activities of the Communists pouring into India from outside but of checking the political movement of Indians fighting for complete independence and the amelioration of the working classes.<sup>59</sup> The threat of communism could be met with the relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code. He was not in favour of arming the Government with still more judicial powers.<sup>60</sup> He denounced the Communists as well as the capitalists as both aimed at the curtailment of rights. Capitalism was still worse since it aimed at Imperialism.<sup>61</sup> He said:

We are in no danger from Bolshevism or Communism. The greatest danger we are in, is from capitalists and

exploiters. Don't we all know that money comes from Lancashire, from British trade unions, to help the strikes so that Indian Mills may not operate? It is not Moscow money alone that helps to foster strikes. Why blame the Bolsheviks only ? . . . ”<sup>62</sup>

### The Nehru Report

Meanwhile Lajpat Rai was wholeheartedly popularising the contents of the Nehru Report.<sup>63</sup> The question of complete independence or Dominion Status was also occupying his thought. He was sympathetic to those who were working for complete independence, but he himself was for seeking Dominion Status for India.<sup>64</sup> Although at the Madras Congress in December 1927, presided over by Dr. M.A. Ansari, a resolution was passed unanimously “declaring the goal of the Indian people to be complete independence”,<sup>65</sup> there was a good deal of confusion about it. The resolution, Lajpat Rai clarified, was passed as “many people believed that Dominion Status also meant national independence”.<sup>66</sup> He said “that we should honestly, wholeheartedly and sincerely work for Dominion Status whether we get it immediately or in the next few years. I say so because to me in our present circumstances, that seems to be the path of practical political wisdom.”<sup>67</sup>

Lajpat Rai supported the case for Dominion Status, keeping in view the future membership of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the future cooperation of the Indian States, and the hostility of the Government. He did not believe in any daydreaming on the question of the future political set up of the country.<sup>68</sup> The “diversion of attention”, he said, in favour of the goal of complete Independence consumes so much time and energy which could be used to better advantage, that in my judgment it is neither wise nor expedient to indulge in it.”<sup>69</sup>

Thus, the objective of Dominion Status featuring in the Nehru Report received Lajpat Rai's full acceptance.<sup>70</sup> Earlier, Lajpat Rai had attended the All Parties Conference at Lucknow<sup>71</sup> from August 28 to 31, where the recommendation of the Nehru Committee Report on the communal problem and other issues related to the Constitution of India were



accepted. At Lucknow, Lajpat Rai had moved a resolution in appreciation of the Nehru Report. The provision for joint or mixed electorates as opposed to separate communal electorates was after Lajpat Rai's heart.<sup>72</sup> To him the Nehru Report was an exact replica of national aspirations and a sincere attempt at solving the communal issue. He said : "Those who will oppose it will practically oppose Swaraj and may be justly described as the enemies of India."<sup>73</sup>

Again, while presiding over the Provincial Hindu Conference of Agra at Etawah on October 27-28<sup>74</sup> Lajpat Rai reiterated that leaving aside a few, the Hindus in general accepted the recommendations of the Nehru Report.<sup>75</sup> For the Muslims he said :

The principles of the Nehru Report are the only principles on which a democratic Constitution of India is possible to be framed at present. It provides ample guarantees for minorities. . . .<sup>76</sup>

Clarifying the stand of the Hindus on communal representation, he said :

It should be understood that they stand for a complete elimination of the principle of communal representation from the Constitution of the country. If they accept the retention of it to the extent it is to be found in the report at present, they do so out of a profound sense of necessity, the necessity of reconciling Mohammedan sentiment and feeling to that extent.<sup>77</sup>

Reverting to the Simon Commission, he maintained that the purpose of the Commission was to pour ridicule on India and prove it before the nations of the world how inefficient and undeserving Indians were for self-government.<sup>78</sup> He felt sorry for those Indians who were wilfully playing in the hands of the British Government and supplying false information and evidence to the Commission.<sup>79</sup> The attempts of the leaders of the Depressed Classes like Dr. Ambedkar and M.C. Rajah were considered by him to be most disastrous to the unity of India. He realized that much injustice had been done to the

depressed classes and the Hindu caste system was the bane of Hindu society. But he did not like the attitude of the leaders in playing into the hands of the vested Indian and foreign interests.<sup>80</sup>

Similarly he regarded the attitude of the Muslims towards the Simon Commission as unhelpful. He believed that all those Muslims who advocated the cause of communal representation were more spontaneous in according cooperation to the Commission. Some like Dr. Shafat Ahmed Khan even submitted a memorandum with "mischievous and false statements of facts" for the Muslims of U.P.<sup>81</sup> Lajpat Rai was dissatisfied with the political atmosphere of the country.

### Despair

His health was also dwindling. He voiced his growing pessimism in a letter to his friend and "political son"<sup>82</sup> G.D. Birla.<sup>83</sup> The note accompanying the letter read:

I am sick of life—both mentally and physically. I suppose the one leads to the other. I have no zest left in me, no go, no desire. . . . The fact is that I have lost faith in everything—in myself, in God, in humanity, in life, in the world. Nothing seems to be real or tangible. Everything seems to be ephemeral and outcome of human vanity. . . .<sup>84</sup>

Further:

I have thundered from hundreds of platforms that the doctrine which says 'this world is false, unreal, imaginary and a delirium' is false and immoral. . . . Yet today in the evening of my life I find myself confronted with the same view. . . I have reached a stage when all activities, public or private, all desires, all emotions, seem to be nothing but vanity. . . . There was a time when I believed in God . . . that belief is gone.<sup>85</sup>

He questioned God and everything else:

How can I believe in a God who is said to be just and benevolent, almighty and omniscient who rules over this

absurd world? . . . Can this world, full of injustices, inequalities, cruelties and barbarities, be the handiwork of a good God? . . . Is there any truth in religions, or in creeds, or in faiths? . . . Does truth lead to disruption and disunion? . . .<sup>86</sup>

Concluding, Lajpat Rai admitted:

. . . No one comes upto my ideals. I admire Gandhiji. I admire Malaviyaji, but I am often myself indulging in bitter criticism of them. Public life, public activities, public engagements are no longer alluring; they do not attract me; they do not please me, yet I find I cannot live without them. Oh! What am I to do—I am miserable, I am lonely, I am unhappy. Yet I hug my miserableness. I do want to get rid of this state of mind but I don't know how.<sup>87</sup>

### **Lathi Charge and Death**

Yet, when the Simon Commission arrived at Lahore on October 30, 1928,<sup>88</sup> Lajpat Rai along with Madan Mohan Malaviya was heading the procession in defiance of orders which prohibited public demonstrations in or near the railway station. The procession was declared illegal and the police resorted to lathi charge on the peaceful demonstrators. Lajpat Rai being in the forefront was brutally attacked.<sup>89</sup> The assault made on Lajpat Rai by a British officer Mr. Saunders, the Assistant Superintendent of Police,<sup>90</sup> was without any provocation. Some of the prominent leaders, who were with him tried to shield him, but Saunders concentrated the attack on him. Those who were with Lajpat Rai felt that it was pre-meditated and was part of a plan to do away with him.<sup>91</sup> Lajpat Rai felt deeply humiliated, bruised in both spirit and body.

The same evening, addressing a mammoth public meeting Lajpat Rai made this declaration:

I want to say from this platform that every blow that was hurled at us this afternoon was a nail in the coffin of the British Empire. Nobody who has seen that sight, is likely to forget it. It has sunk deep into our soul. We have to avenge ourselves of this cowardly attack, not by violently

attacking them but by gaining our freedom. I wish to warn the Government that if a violent revolution takes place in this country, the responsibility for bringing it about will fall on such officers as misbehaved themselves this afternoon. Our creed still stands and we are pledged to a struggle of peaceful non-violence. But if the Government officers continue to behave like this I would not wonder if the young men were to go out of our hands and do whatever they chose with the object of gaining the freedom of their country. I do not know whether I shall be alive to see that day. But whether alive or dead, if that day is forced on them by the Government my spirit from behind will bless them for their struggle.<sup>92</sup>

The physical injury<sup>93</sup> accompanied with mental shock hastened Lajpat Rai's end.<sup>94</sup> "He felt angry and bitter", wrote Jawaharlal Nehru, "not so much at the personal humiliation, as at the national humiliation involved in the assault on him".<sup>95</sup> In these circumstances, Lajpat Rai passed away on November 17, 1928. According to Subhash Chandra Bose, "Great sorrow and indignation followed the death of Lalaji and since the Simon Commission was indirectly responsible for his death, the Commission became more unpopular with the people who used to idolise the great Punjab leader."<sup>96</sup>

### Revenge

His death made the youngmen of the Punjab turn violent and thirsty for revenge. A revolutionary movement sprang up in the province.<sup>97</sup> To ventilate the feelings of bitterness that had spread among the youth of the Punjab, a terrorist Party named the Hindustan Socialist Republic Association planned and carried out the murder of Saunders through Bhagat Singh.<sup>98</sup> Bhagat Singh, the famous revolutionary riddled Saunders with bullets.<sup>99</sup> Recalling the event later, Ajoy Ghosh, a co-worker of Bhagat Singh in the Association and later, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India, wrote : "our party decided to strike a blow. In November 1928, Saunders, the Assistant Superintendent of Police, the man who

had led the lathi-charge, was shot dead in front of the Police Head Quarters in Lahore.”<sup>100</sup>

There is some dispute on who the real target of the revolutionaries was—Saunders or Scott, the Superintendent of Police. From the biography of Azad in Hindi by his colleague Viswanath Vaishampayan (pp. 1-116) it is clear that the revolutionaries had decided to avenge the death of Lala Lajpat Rai. It is also said that in a condolence meeting held after the demise of Lala Lajpat Rai, Shrimati Basanti Devi, the widow of the famous C. R. Das had asked exhortingly if some young man would avenge his death before his ashes became cold. Scott, the Superintendent of Police had hidden himself in the Police Training School. Besides, Saunders, the Assistant Superintendent of Police, was the person who actually led the assault on Lalaji. This version is also supported by another revolutionary J. N. Sanyal in his biography of Bhagat Singh in Hindi. It was first published in 1929 and immediately proscribed and a revised edition was brought out from Mirzapur in 1970. Shrimati Virendra Sindhu, niece of Bhagat Singh in her biography (published in Hindi by Bhartiya Jnanapith, 1968) mentions that the posters that were got published by three revolutionaries before the assassination of Saunders included the name of Scott. Subsequently the name of Saunders was over-written. But later in the posters that were got prepared in the night only the name of Saunders was mentioned. This is also the view of Yashpal as expressed in his memoirs *Singhavalokan* (p. 145).

However, another revolutionary Shiv Verma has written that the revolutionaries really wanted to kill the Police Superintendent Scott, and Jai Gopal who turned approver later on pointed at Saunders considering him to be Scott and only subsequently was it discovered that it was Saunders who was killed and who had lathi-charged Lalaji. There is thus a certain amount of confusion on this point, but it seems that probably the revolutionaries wanted to kill the Chief Police functionaries responsible for the assault and the subsequent death of Lala Lajpat Rai. The red leaflets that were distributed and pasted on the walls in Lahore had the following text:

**Hindustan Socialist Republican Army  
Notice**

**Bureaucracy alerted!**

**Lala Lajpat Rai's death is avenged by the murder  
of J. P. Saunders.**

How sad it is that the life of a revered leader of 30 crores of people was taken by an ordinary contemptible police officer named J. P. Saunders. This great insult of the Nation was challenge to Indian youths. Today the world has witnessed that the public of India has not become lifeless. Their blood has not frozen. They can sacrifice their lives for the honour of their nation and an example of this has been given by those young men of the country whom the leaders of this country defame and insult. Oppressive Government be cautioned. Do not injure the feelings of the depressed and oppressed people of this country. Stop your devilish activities. Despite your clever rules and regulations depriving us from the use of arms, the pistols and revolvers would be coming to the people of this country. If these arms are not enough for an armed revolution even they would suffice for avenging national insults. Let our own people defame and insult us. Let the foreign government oppress us but we shall always be ready to preserve the national honour and to teach a lesson to the oppressors. We will make the callings of a revolution still louder and will cry from the gallows also 'Long Live the Revolution'.

We are sorry to take the life of a man but this man was a part and parcel of that heartless and contemptible and unjust order which ought to be finished. This government is the most oppressive government of the world.

We are sorry for shedding the blood of a man but it is necessary to shed blood on the alter of revolution. We aim at such a revolution which would end exploitation of man by man. Long Live Revolution.

18th Dec., 1928.

sd/- Balraj  
C-in-C, Punjab H.S.R A.

Balshastri Hardas's account seems to be quite plausible:

All other important members of the H.S.R.A. were assembled there at this time. Besides Chandra Shekhar Azad, Kailashpati, Mahavir Singh, Kundanlal, Shivrampant Rajguru, Bhagat Singh, Yashpal and some others were in Lahore. In the first week of December, all these leaders of the H.S.R.A. met for very far-reaching deliberations in a secret place in the Majang locality of Lahore. Not even a month had passed after the departure of Lalaji and the matter was very fresh in every one's mind. Sardar Bhagat Singh put forward the resolution for the revenge of Lalaji's murder. The resolution was wholly approved and it was decided that both Mr. Scott, the officer who passed the order for the lathi-charge as well as Mr. Saunders who actually struck Lalaji should be killed. There is a notion that the meeting decided only to kill Mr. Scott and Mr. Saunders was killed in mistake. But this is not correct. The meeting had passed the resolution to do away with the lives of both—it was only the mistake in the statement of Jai Gopal, the approver in the Lahore Conspiracy, that such a notion got currency and some authors also repeated the same. Saunders was not killed out of mistake but according to plan. One must accept what the actual leaders of the movement say. Shri Yashpal writes: "The order was given by Mr. Scott, and it was carried out by Mr. Saunders. The H.S.R.A. had no enmity for either of the two persons. If it was decided to shoot them the motive was only one—and both of these officers had earned that punishment. There was also no reason to mistake these persons. Mr. Scott used to move in his small blue car and Mr. Saunders on his red motorcycle. Mr. Scott had no fixed times of office and hence, it had to be decided to take a chance at him only at his bungalow; whereas in regard to Saunders the venue was fixed at the front of the D.A.V. College, as he used to go to the police station opposite the College. For a number of days a watch was kept on the timings and the manner of movements of both of them. Saunders used to come some time through the Gol Bag and some times via the Town

Hall by the side of the Gol Bag. He had the habit of keeping his motor-cycle at a fixed spot opposite the police station. There could not be any mistake or a cause for it. Especially Mr. Scott was not at all in the town particularly on those two or three days. How could there be any mistake?<sup>102</sup>

The death of Lajpat Rai produced a wave of national indignation throughout the country. The people and the leaders alike expressed their anguish at the dastardly attack. Subhash Chandra Bose "thought it provided an excellent opportunity to launch an all out movement to oust the British Raj from India".<sup>103</sup> In order to allay the public misgivings the Punjab Government instituted a departmental enquiry to look into the circumstances leading to Lajpat Rai's death. Since, many an eye-witness account of the assault on Lajpat Rai had appeared in the Press the Government could not withhold the whole story. Describing the assault on this great patriot, Dr. Mohammad Alam told the Punjab Legislative Assembly that a European police officer caught hold of Lajpat Rai when he was leading a protest procession and struck him with a stick "near the region of the heart". He was beaten "cruelly and mercilessly".<sup>104</sup> So it decided to have a second enquiry known as the Boyd Committee Enquiry.

But the Boyd Committee was no better. Subsequently Pandit Dwarka Prasad Mishra moved the following resolution in the Central Legislative Assembly on February 15, 1929:

... This House believes that the death of Lala Lajpat Rai was accelerated by the injury he received at the hands of the police while leading a boycott procession on the arrival of Simon Commission at Lahore and is of opinion that the enquiry conducted by the Boyd Committee was unreal and instituted deliberately to justify and whitewash the crimes committed by the police.<sup>105</sup>

Munshi Iswar Saran submitted a substitute resolution demanding a committee of enquiry with the Home member, Motilal Nehru, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas, Sir Abdul Quyum, Maulvi Mohammed Yakub,



and Munshi Iswar Saran as its members.<sup>106</sup> But the Home Member, Crerar, took a different stand. He summarily disposed of the speeches of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Hansraj, two eye witnesses to the assault on Lajpat Rai, and said that no *prima facie* case had been established by them to warrant an enquiry.<sup>107</sup> This was countered by Motilal Nehru, who said that an open enquiry, by a duly constituted tribunal or commission in which people had full faith was essential for judging the circumstances of Lajpat Rai's death.

But, Sir, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that if the facts are as they are stated to be, it was nothing but murder. One single incident of the whole affair which has been referred to by more speakers than one on this side, namely, an unknown person appearing for a moment upon the scene, holding an umbrella over the head of Lala Lajpat Rai, and disappearing the next moment, that single incident is full of meaning. What follows is the attack on Lala Lajpat Rai. Any reasonable man, any man given to the habit of connecting cause with effect can have no possible doubt in his mind that the holding of the umbrella over the head of Lala Lajpat Rai had a significant connection with the assault. It meant pointing out the target and showing who the victim was to be. . . . In the face of these facts . . . it is your bounden duty to hold an enquiry of a nature which would satisfy the public demand.<sup>108</sup>

The resolution of Munshi Iswar Saran was finally adopted by the Assembly.

Glowing tributes were paid to Lajpat Rai. Mahatma Gandhi wrote: "Lala Lajpat Rai is dead. Long Live Lalaji! Men like Lalaji cannot die so long as the sun shines in the Indian sky. . . ."<sup>109</sup> In the words of Romain Rolland:

Lala Lajpat Rai possessed the penetrating insight into men and nations, the quick, infallible glance, the bold, yet just determination, the exactitude and precision in all details of action, which make the master-mind, the great statesman. I have often remarked since, that I considered

him to be equal of our greatest European politicians (Europe has none of such calibre today).

He further wrote :

But to these gifts of an active mind, which the West is accustomed to consider as belonging to itself alone, he added the soul of ancient India, of the old Rishi—heroic faith, unlimited selflessness and absolute sacrifice.<sup>110</sup>

The nation paid its homage to Lajpat Rai by observing November 29, 1928, as Lajpat Rai Day throughout India.<sup>111</sup> The venue of the Indian National Congress, which met at Lahore in December 1929, under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, was named by the Chairman of the Reception Committee, S. Kitchlew, as Lajpat Rai Nagar.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, came to end a glorious life, completely devoted to the cause of Indian freedom. And, if his life embodied the spirit of Indian nationalism, his death vindicated that spirit even more. As D.P. Mishra wrote,

Lalaji was an impassioned orator with demonstrative gestures, flashing eyes, and splendored voice. Once in the course of a passionate denunciation of the government in the assembly, I saw him lifting up his right hand and invoking the curse of God upon the tyrannical government. In an enslaved country such a passionate dedication to the cause of freedom, more often than not, ends in martyrdom, and finally martyrdom proved to be Lalaji's reward for his burning patriotism, outspokenness and unflinching courage.<sup>113</sup>

His life work was not abandoned after his death, but carried to its culmination by his contemporaries and successors, Gandhi and Nehru till the dawn of independence.

## Notes

1. See *The Indian Quarterly Register*, Jan-June, 1926, pp. 145-50.
2. See Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit. p. 157. He wrote "I learnt a new party having been formed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai to oppose the Swaraj Party or the regular Congress Party in the legislature, as it now was. The Nationalist Party, this was called. I could not make out, and I still do not know, what grounds of principle separated the new party from the old. Indeed most present day Indian parties in the legislature are like Tweedledum and Tweedledee; no real principles separate them. The Swaraj Party, for the first time, brought a new and aggressive element, in the councils and it stood for a more extreme political policy than the others. But the difference was one of degree, not of kind."
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 159.
5. Durga Dass, *India From Curzon to Nehru and After*, op. cit., p. 123.
6. Ibid.
7. *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 72. He writes : "Gandhiji, indeed, was continually laying stress on the religious and spiritual side of the movement. His religion was not dogmatic, but it did not mean a definitely religious outlook on life. . . . And yet Gandhiji's leading colleagues in the working committee—my father, Deshbandhu Das, Lala Lajpat Rai, and others—were not men of religion in the ordinary sense of the word, and they considered political problems on the political plane only. . . ."
8. Ibid., p. 158.
9. *The People*, December 12, 1926.
10. See Gordhanbhai I. Patel, *Vithalbhai Patel : Life and Times*, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 740.
11. See *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. II, 19 Jan-21 Feb., 1927, p. 474.
12. See *The People*, March 6, 1927.
13. See Algurai Shastri, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., pp. 501-2.
14. Ibid., p. 503.
15. See R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 285.
16. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 312.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. To know "the tangled story of the British interest and cooperation in the publication of *Mother India* and to know as to what extent imperial and conservative forces can go in their nefarious task of denigrating a people fighting for their independence from a colonial rule" see Manoranjan Jha, *Katherlan Mayo and India* (People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971).

20. Lajpat Rai, *Unhappy India* (Banna Publishing House, Calcutta, 1928), K.L. Gauba, with his characteristic coloured vision comments: "It was widely reviewed, but unfortunately, not widely read. *Unhappy India* was neither a happy theme nor a happy inspiration." See *Friends and Foes* (India Book Co., New Delhi, 1974).

21. See *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. IV, 18 Aug-5 Sept 1927, p. 3249.

22. Ibid., p. 3256.

23. Ibid.

24. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 326

25. See Gordhanbhai I. Patel, op. cit., p. 790

26. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. IV, op. cit., p. 3930.

27. Ibid., pp. 3931-2.

28. Ibid., p. 3930.

29. See *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. II., op. cit., p. 491. V. C. Joshi (Ed.) mentions : "The case was started by the Punjab Government under section 153-A, I. P. C. in 1924 and the accused Mahashe Rajpal, an Arya Samajist publisher of Lahore, was charged for exciting hatred between Hindus and Mohammedans. The publication 'Rangila Rasul' the subject of the case, was a small brochure in Urdu written anonymously and contained attacks on the life of the Prophet of Islam. The accused was found guilty by the trial magistrate and sentenced to ten month's rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 1000. The Sessions Judge upheld the conviction on appeal but reduced the sentence. On May 4, 1927, the Punjab High Court quashed the conviction and held that Section 153-A was not applicable in the case. Mahashe Rajpal was assassinated on September 26, 1927, by a Muslim fanatic named Khuda Baksh."

30. See *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. IV, 1927, p. 3921.

31. Ibid., p. 3932.

32. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., pp. 314-15.

33. *The People*, October 20, 1927.

34. See Subhash C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, op. cit., p. 203.

35. See R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 307.

36. See Algurai Shastri, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., p. 507.

37. See Subhash C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, op. cit., p. 203. Also see V. B. Kulkarni, *The Indian Triumvirate* (Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1969), p. 344. In his presidential address at the Tenth Session of the All India National Liberal Federation on December 27, 1927, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru read out to the Conference the letter Lala Lajpat Rai had received from Colonel Wedgwood, concerning the Commission, to reinforce his plea for ignoring it.

38. See *The People*, December 15, 1927.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., December 22, 1927.

41. Ibid. Hon. Edward Cadogan, one of the members of the Simon Commission in his pen-portrait of Lajpat Rai recalled his being intro-

duced to Lajpat Rai but he (Lajpat Rai) "made it evident that he had no inclination for social intercourse with any member of the Commission. This was my loss and my regret, as I would have valued personal contact with one of the most remarkable figures in the forefront of the Indian politics at that time. Lala Lajpat Rai had many admirers amongst the British community and Indians of every shade of opinion. One and all were agreed that he was single-hearted in his desire to do the best that in him lay for his fellow-countrymen." *The India We Saw* (John Murray, London, 1933), pp. 31-2.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Gordhanbhai I. Patel, *Vithalbhai Patel : Life and Times, Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 847.

47. Ibid.

48. See *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1928, Vol. I, p. 382.

49. See Gordhanbhai I. Patel, op. cit., p. 949.

50. Ibid.

51. See *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. I, 1st February-7 March, 1928, p. 496.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., p. 501.

54. Ibid., p. 506.

55. *Vithalbhai Patel : Life and Times, Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 849.

56. See Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 170-1 and 198-9.

57. See *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. I, 1928, pp. 693-8.

58. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., pp. 327-8.

59. See *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. III, 4 Sept. to 15th Sept. 1928, p. 623.

60. Ibid., p. 639.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid., p. 645.

63. See *The People*, November 11, 1928.

64. Ibid., October 11, 1928.

65. See Subhash C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, op. cit., p. 205.

66. Ibid.

67. See *The People*, October 11, 1928.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. See *Modern Review*, November 1928.

71. See *The Indian Struggle, Part II*, op. cit., p. 210.

72. See the *Tribune*, August 23, 1928.

73. Ibid.

74. See *The People*, November 1, 1928. Also see Sri Ram Sharma, "Lajpat Rai's Concept of Political Freedom : Means And Ends", Seminar Papers on *Lajpat Rai and Relevance of His Ideas Today*, Punjab

University, Chandigarh, November 17-19, 1972 (mimeographed). He comments: "It is interesting to note that Lajpat Rai who had begun his public life in the service of the Hindu community, performed almost the last public act of his life in the same cause by presiding over the Etawah Provincial Hindu Conference. To him this service was a necessary part of preparing the nation to shoulder the burden of a free government successfully."

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. See *Link*, January 31, 1965.

83. See *Writings and Speeches, Vol. II.*, op. cit., p. 417. Lajpat Rai to G. D. Birla dated Poona July 12, 1928.

84. Ibid., p. 417.

85. Ibid., pp. 418-19.

86. Ibid., pp. 419-20.

87. Ibid., p. 422. At the evening talks with Sri Aurobindo on February 4, 1939, Mr. Purani referred to this letter which Lajpat Rai wrote to G. D. Birla. Commenting upon this Sri Aurobindo said, "I see. So if God were omnipotent and all-merciful, he would not create this world ! . . . . But I wonder why people in India at the end of their lives come to same conclusion as Lajpat Rai. Almost all come to regard life and the world as an illusion. Is it the ancestral Indian blood or is it the atmosphere of the place or something personal, a psychological change? I suppose there may be a strain running in the blood." He further observed, "But the Christians also have nearly the same idea when they say, vanity of vanities! All is vanity and vexation of the spirit." Here Mr. Purani, in his turn, remarked "Lajpat Rai was a Jain by birth. That might account for his turning away from the world." See Nirodbaran, *Talks With Sri Aurobindo* (Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, Calcutta, 1966), pp. 376-7.

88. See R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. III*, op. cit., pp. 318-19.

89. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 320.

90. See R. C. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 319. One opinion, expressed by G. S. Deol is that it was Scott and not Saunders who made a baton charge on Lajpat Rai. See *Shaheed Bhagat Singh : A Biography* (Punjabi University Patiala, 1969), pp. 30-6.

91. See *Legislative Assembly Debates, 1929, Vol I*, pp. 832-3.

92. *The Tribune*, November 2, 1928.

93. See C. Y. Chintamani, op. cit., p. 84.

94. See Subhash C. Bose, op. cit., p. 209.

95. *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 174.

96. *The Indian Struggle*, op. cit., p. 209.

97. See Ram Gopal, *How India Struggled for Freedom* (The Book Centre, Bombay, 1967), pp. 352-3.

98. See R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. III, op. cit., pp. 319, 512-13, and 515. See also Subhas C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle, Part II*, op. cit., pp. 224-5.

99. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "Bhagat Singh thus did not become popular because of his act of terrorism, but because he seemed to vindicate, for the moment the honour of Lala Lajpat Rai, and through him of the nation." Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 175.

100. See *Bhagat Singh And His Comrades* (People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1945), p. 13.

101. See Balshastri Hardas, *Armed Struggle for Freedom : Ninety Years of War of Indian Independence : 1857 to Subhash*, rendered into English by Shri S. S. Apte (Kal Prakashan, Poona, 1958), pp. 325-6.

Also see David M. Laushey, *Bengal Terrorism and The Marxist Left : Aspects of Regional Nationalism in India, 1905-1942* (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1975), p. 57. Laushey observes that the leaflet was published by Chandra Shekhar Azad as "Balraj".

102. Ibid.

103. See Sisir K. Bose and others, *A Beacon Across Asia : A Biography of Subhash Chandra Bose* (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1973), p. 25.

104. See *The Indian Annual Register*, July-December, 1928, Vol. II, p. 250.

105. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1929, Vol. I, pp. 832-3. Also see D. P. Mishra, *Living An Era*, op. cit., p. 118-23.

106. Ibid., p. 840.

107. Ibid., p. 847.

108. Ibid.

109. *Young India*, November 22, 1928, cited in U. S. Mohan Rao (Ed.), *Pen-Portraits and Tributes by Gandhiji*, op. cit., p. 145.

Also see S. B. Kher (Ed.) *Homage To the Departed by M. K. Gandhi* (Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1958), p. 66.

110. Romain Rolland, *INDE*, op. cit., p. 258, November 26, 1928.

111. See J. S. Sharma, *Indian National Congress*, op. cit., p. 512.

112. Ibid., p. 344.

113. *Living An Era*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 107.

## CHAPTER VII

### Political Ideas

Politics is the life-breath of any nationalist movement. Naturally the political ideas of distinguished national leaders are of the utmost significance. This was especially true of Lajpat Rai whose career spanned the most critical years of the freedom movement in India.

#### Extremism

Lajpat Rai started as a Moderate in the Indian National Congress. His latter Extremist associates B. C. Pal and B. G. Tilak were also moderate in their outlook initially. It was with the turn of the century that the Extremists came into their own.<sup>1</sup> The great school of militant nationalism flourished under their leadership.<sup>2</sup>

Lajpat Rai, in spite of his many similarities with the extremists, differed from them in the political objective he had set before himself. It was he who laid the foundation of militant nationalism in the country as early as 1905 at the Benaras session of the Congress through his forceful advocacy of Passive Resistance.<sup>3</sup> "It is seldom realised", Biman Behari Majumdar writes, "that amongst the Nationalist leaders of India Lala Lajpat Rai was the earliest exponent of militant nationalism in the country. He was the first spokesman of the doctrine of Passive Resistance."<sup>4</sup> Lajpat Rai believed that India could become free only "after going through a process of a violent political upheaval".<sup>5</sup>

Though Lajpat Rai was not an advocate of complete independence, he did not approve of Indian soldiers fighting England's war as mercenaries.<sup>6</sup> In this respect, Lajpat Rai differed from Tilak and Pal. For, as K. P. Karunakaran says:



. . . Tilak, at the end of his political career, showed greater signs of cooperation with the British administration than he did before that period, and Bipin Chandra Pal, the champion of complete Independence during 1906-8 began to advocate India participating in an Imperial Federation later. Aurobindo Ghose moved away from political radicalism and aggressive nationalism. . . .<sup>7</sup>

While B. C. Pal and Aurobindo Ghose gave religio-mystical shape to their nationalism<sup>8</sup> and Tilak revived the Ganapati festival, Lajpat Rai, in spite of his faith in the *Bhagavad-Gita*<sup>9</sup> and his early association with the Arya Samaj, kept his nationalism strictly political and free from religious mysticism.<sup>10</sup>

Lajpat Rai had no faith either in the British sense of 'fairplay and justice' or in the mendicancy of "Prayers and petitions". "The moment you question their final supremacy, they change colour and forget all political principles."<sup>11</sup> He was also not carried away by the oft-repeated claim of benevolence of the British government.

Their intentions are always benevolent. . . . When cornered, they bring in the theory of trust. They are trustees, and in the discharge of their trust, they must remain in possession of your country and have full control over your purse. They must supply your poor people with cheap goods.<sup>12</sup>

As an extremist he was critical of the Moderates for their excessive dependence on the British Government. To him, the Congress agitation in the early phase lacked vigour and striking power. Its leaders were so much enchanted with the British rule that the Congress became "a halting, half-hearted political movement depending on the sympathy and goodwill of the very class against whom it is directed".<sup>13</sup> Lajpat Rai's endeavour was to break this spell. He was convinced that the British government could not give more to the Indian people than what might be essential for its own preservation. He, therefore, suggested a radical change in the country's political programme.<sup>14</sup> As for himself he showed self-reliance, courage and a spirit of defiance which characterized the new leadership. This was a breakthrough for the social reconstruction and

political regeneration of the country. Commenting upon this, M. A. Buch writes:

The fundamental difference between the old nationalism of the Congress and the new nationalism of Tilak and Lajpat Rai and Pal, is that the old nationalism built upon the consciousness of the weakness of the people; while the new nationalism built upon the consciousness of the strength of the people.<sup>15</sup>

Further:

The new nationalism distinguishes itself effectively from the old nationalism in this, that it takes Indian people as an organic whole with a great past behind it and a great future before it. The Indian nation has its own peculiar genius revealed to us in its entire history.<sup>16</sup>

Lajpat Rai himself described the difference between the "moderates" and the "extremists" when he stated that "... The former appealed to the British government and the British nation, the latter appealed to their own people and to their God."<sup>17</sup> He firmly believed that the enslaved people could never love the land of their alien masters. Those Indians who believed in the celebration of the "Empire Day" were, according to Lajpat Rai, "hypocrites who dragged Indian patriotism into the mire".<sup>18</sup>

Lajpat Rai believed that for a subject people struggling for freedom, it was essential to build up sufficient strength behind their demand. This could be achieved by instilling a sense of public duty among the people. The habit of subordinating our individual interests to the interests of the community at large had to be inculcated. Moreover it was essential to have a courageous and selfless leadership for pressing further India's national demands.<sup>19</sup>

Lajpat Rai wanted every Indian to be patriotic and dutiful. These qualities were to be measured by the willingness to suffer for the national cause. The national consciousness could be aroused only by those who put everything at stake for the emancipation of the country. A craving for positions of power and more popularity was of no avail.<sup>20</sup> That would make

people all the more dependent on foreign rule. As Lajpat Rai wrote:

One of the biggest evils of an alien rule is the tendency for dependence that it creates in the subject people, which naturally leads to divisions and differences over the distribution of crumbs, which fall from the master's table.<sup>21</sup>

The genesis of 'extremism' was to be found in a disbelief in the 'providential' character of the British Government. Giving expression to radicalism, Lajpat Rai remarked:

. . . Chains are chains, no matter gilded. Can the wealth of the whole world be put in the scales over against liberty and honour? What would it avail if one were to get the sovereignty of the world but lose his own soul? A subject people has no soul just as a slave can have none. Subjects and slaves are not even the masters of their bodies.<sup>22</sup>

About the supposed incapacity of Indians to run representative institutions Lajpat Rai said—

The real question is the dread of power passing from the Britishers into Indian hands. It is that dread that is the dominating influence in the policy of the British Government in India.<sup>23</sup>

Having witnessed the political institutions in America, Japan and England, he held that Indians were not inferior to their Western counterparts.

### National Regeneration

As an intense nationalist, Lajpat Rai wanted all round regeneration of India—political, religious, social and economic. He insisted on a new four-fold programme of national regeneration—consisting of Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education. As regards Swaraj, it could be realised only when the Government derived its authority from the people, and was responsible to them and not to any outside authority like the British Parliament.<sup>24</sup> Unlike the Moderates, Lajpat Rai did not like Swaraj in stages and that too at the

sweet will of the rulers.<sup>25</sup> He would strive to achieve it through self-reliance and effective struggle. He said : "Mine is a religion of hope and faith. I believe in struggle—a righteous, stern and unyielding struggle. . . ."<sup>26</sup>

Lajpat Rai's struggle for Swaraj was aimed at the extermination of the British authority from India. He was ready to value Englishman's cooperation as a friend, as an ally but not as a master.

We shall welcome cooperation. We shall welcome advice. We shall welcome guidance also in certain matters. But we shall resent patronage and dictation. . . . We have behind us the grown wisdom of six thousand years at our back. . . .<sup>27</sup>

Lajpat Rai's concept of Swaraj did not mean complete independence. His immediate goal was the attainment of self-government within the British Empire on terms of equality. He would be content if his country enjoyed "the same rights and privileges, no less and no more, which are at the present moment being enjoyed by Canada and South Africa. . . ."<sup>28</sup> In this, Lajpat Rai was voicing the views of many of his countrymen about independence initially.

Asserting the need for self-government or Swarajya for India, Lajpat Rai made it clear that the kind of self-government desired would depend much on the time and the manner of attaining it. It would also depend on the moral and the spiritual development of the nation, and its ability and capacity for putting political ideas into practice. The world situation prevalent at the time would also influence it. Moreover, the Swarajya hoped to be achieved in a decade would be different from the Swarajya at the beginning of the decade.

The Swarajya of 1930 must from the nature of things be different from the Swarajya of 1923. It would be foolish for us to put forth an authoritative scheme before the time and the nation are ripe for it. . . . In the meantime what we can and ought to do is to declare our principles and start educating people in them.<sup>29</sup>

Lajpat Rai also emphasised the need for basing the form of self-government on sound principles. One could learn from the political experience of the Western countries but this required a cautious attitude in selecting and rejecting the models tried elsewhere.<sup>30</sup> He believed that there was no need "to copy bad models from the history of the West. The English constitution was not the last word in politics, and Western civilization was not the last word in civilization. Though Indians must not depend upon outside help they should not be obstinate in refusing it."<sup>31</sup> Lajpat Rai's realism in politics is again evident. As he wrote:

Perhaps it does not matter much if we get Swarajya today or in five years. But it does matter that our development into Swarajya and our preparation for it should be on right lines and not on lines which have been discarded by the rest of the world or which, after being tried for over a century, have been found to be defective and wasteful.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, Lajpat Rai was for a judicious assimilation of all good practices from everywhere.

### **Dominion Status**

It was this pragmatic approach which led Lajpat Rai, a month before his death in 1928, to press the demand for the Dominion Status as against that of complete political independence for India.<sup>33</sup> He foresaw a long and winding road ahead in the struggle for freedom. His belief was that Dominion Status would make India not independent at once, but fulfil a feasible goal, whether achieved immediately or after a few years. According to him, Dominion Status would secure for India the freedom to remain within the Commonwealth or to quit at will. There was also no fear of India being out-voted by the race-prejudiced members of the Commonwealth in its deliberations. If at all this happened, India was free to withdraw her membership.<sup>34</sup> In this Lajpat Rai anticipated the arguments which leaders in free India advanced in favour of staying within the Commonwealth.

Lajpat Rai also thought that the declaration of complete independence as the immediate goal for India would make the

Indian Native States suspicious and retrogressive. Therefore, the immediate task before the Indian leaders was to win the Indian states over to their side as any combination between the British Government and these states could thwart India's political progress and even the attainment of freedom. He said that "the cry of complete political independence leads people away from constructive political and social work and is a disturbing element in the nation-building departments of the country."<sup>35</sup>

Besides, the country was economically helpless. And any movement for complete independence could make the Britishers more repressive, leaving the people completely demoralised. Lajpat Rai also knew that complete independence could not be secured through mere slogan raising and passing of resolutions. He could not envisage complete independence without great trial and ordeal. Nor did he see much chance of success for the supporters of non-violence unless they devised immediate and effective ways and means for securing the objective."<sup>36</sup>

Lajpat Rai also wanted India to be economically independent. He favoured the rapid growth of industries in the country for economic stability and well-being. For this purpose, he considered Swadeshi to be synonymous with patriotism.<sup>37</sup> In it he found the salvation of his country. As he stated:

The spirit of Swadeshi ought to prevail in all departments of life, subject to the one condition that whatever they had to learn from the West in order to maintain progress and secure prosperity, they need not be ashamed to learn. . . they must learn to fight out the battle for nationality in modern terms and under modern conditions, and try to use those weapons which were used against them.<sup>38</sup>

The weapon of boycott had a great significance in this respect. As a means of arousing among the people a militant determination to win Swaraj, it was very effective. On the one hand, it would strike at the political prestige of government, and on the other, it could serve as an effective economic weapon. The boycott of British goods was particularly appropriate as "the logic of losing business is more likely to impress this

nation of shopkeepers than any argument based on the ethics of justice and fair play.”<sup>39</sup>

He wanted India to emulate Japan in the field of industrial development. To him, Japan was a splendid example of what could be achieved by a nation guided by a benevolent national government devoted to her people.<sup>40</sup> He further observed:

Japan is a singular example of a democracy being trained by responsibility and trust. It was not a case of first deserve and then desire. . . . The wonderful development of Japan is due to the wise and tactful management and guidance of the Japanese people by their government.<sup>41</sup>

Lajpat Rai strongly pleaded for a scheme of national education.

To be Indians, first, last, and all the time, in all political and economic matters and in our relations with non-Indians, must be taught to our boys and girls by written and printed lessons as well as by word of mouth. . . .<sup>42</sup>

### Indian Nationalism

A keen observer of the awakening taking place in India, Lajpat Rai concerned that historically Indian nationalism was inspired by European nationalism. The Indian nationalist learnt about “the struggles and successes of the English proletariat, the sufferings and the eventual triumph of the French revolutionists, the efforts and victories of the Italians, the continued struggles of Russians, Poles, Finns, Hungarians and others.”<sup>42</sup> According to Lajpat Rai, not only did the world events leave a strong imprint on the thinking of the Indian nationalists, but great figures like Washington, Cavour, Mazzini, Bismarck, Kossuth, Emmet, Parnell also influenced them to a considerable extent. The names of Indian patriots like Rana Pratap, Shivaji, Guru Govind Singh, Tipu Sultan and the Rani of Jhansi naturally exercised much influence.<sup>44</sup>

The rise of Japan in 1905 as a great power was considered by Lajpat Rai as the assertion of Asia against Europe.<sup>45</sup> Writing on the Russo-Japanese War, Lajpat Rai observed: “The most prominent of these characteristics is the intense

patriotism of the Japanese, a patriotism for which there is no parallel in the history of the world.”<sup>46</sup> The Asian solidarity marked the beginning of a new stir in the masses. He said: “That even at the present moment there is fundamental unity between India, China and Japan, and that the Western influence over these countries has not yet advanced sufficiently to destroy that unity.”<sup>47</sup>

Lajpat Rai felt that the new spirit of national consciousness was taking firm roots in India, changing the immobility of the Indian masses into a dynamic force. According to him the change was taking place imperceptibly.<sup>48</sup>

No amount of official terrorism and no devices, invented or followed to inculcate loyalty, can stop or check the flow of the new feeling of patriotism and nationalism which is being constantly fed by the sentences of death and transportation that the British courts are passing on beardless youths. . . .<sup>49</sup>

With unflinching faith in the greatness of India and her people, Lajpat Rai believed that the nation was superior to the state. He poignantly remarked:

The German theory of the supremacy of the State over the nation must be repudiated, and the future citizen should be trained to think that the nation is superior to and in every way the master of the state. She determines the form of the state and is free to change it as in her corporate capacity, and by her corporate will, she wishes to.<sup>50</sup>

Lajpat Rai's emphasis on nation as being superior to the state was in tune with the historical objective of national unity and political emancipation. He wanted to see India as a united and integrated country, devoid of communal and religious differences. He wanted to curb parochialism, provincialism and individual selfishness. In his attempt to iron out differences about the ultimate political objective, he emphasised the importance of a larger, all-inclusive patriotism. To his mind, nationalism could not last long without everyone being fully patriotic. What he had perceived during his long stay abroad



convinced him that Indians were lacking in the spirit of patriotism<sup>51</sup> and he wanted to instil that spirit in the Indian citizens. For, as he said:

Nothing short of true *Deshbhakti*, which consists in sacrificing the hankering after pelf and power in favour of the unremunerative—yet important and divine task of working for the welfare of our countrymen, can save us from the death and destruction that is staring us in the face. Genuine and selfless devotion (*Bhakti*) for our *desh* ought to be the *dharma*, the noble mission of life, of everyone of us and in the service of our country we should spare neither money nor life.<sup>52</sup>

Lajpat Rai was not unaware of the possibilities of patriotism its getting degenerated into narrow-mindedness and chauvinism. So he wanted Indians to imbibe the right spirit of nationalism:

I am sure Indian Nationalists do not want to set up an aggressive nationalism of the kind which will breed contempt or hatred of other nations. The idea that love of one's country necessarily involves hatred of others, or even indifference to the welfare of the rest of mankind, is absolutely fallacious and mischievous. . . . We love our country because that, and that alone, can enable us to ascend to the heights of humanity.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, patriotism in Lajpat Rai's opinion was neither negative nor a narrow concept. And, it was not to form the basis of either oppression or injustice. Patriotism was broad, positive and ennobling.

Lajpat Rai also clarified the ultimate objectives of political freedom. This freedom is based on the power of the people and their right to constitute themselves into a sovereign nation for the good of all.<sup>54</sup> Lajpat Rai stated his political ideal in these words.

. . . Freedom to live and to live according to our own confession of what life should be, to pursue our own ideals, to develop of our own civilisation and to secure that unity

of purpose which would distinguish us from the other nations of the world, ensuring for us a position of independence and honour, of security from within and non-interference from without.<sup>55</sup>

Lajpat Rai's ideal obviously was a sovereign democratic nation-state. It was also the ultimate goal of India. Reiterating his views, he said:

Every nation has a fundamental right to determine, fix and work out her own ideals. And interference with this right by individuals or nations of foreign origin is unnatural and unjust. The consent of the governed is the only logical and just basis of governments.<sup>56</sup>

The demand for Indian independence was justified among other factors, by this sovereign political principle. Every alien government is the repudiation of the 'consent' of the governed.

While he saw the danger of narrow, chauvinistic nationalism, he at the same time considered utopian cosmopolitanism as futile. The sort of cosmopolitanism had a tendency to distract those engaged in the task of attaining national liberation from their patriotic duties.<sup>57</sup> He believed that the first task which the Indians had before them was to be fully patriotic. Thereafter they could embrace cosmopolitanism. Both could co-exist:

Mazzini's famous dictum on cosmopolitanism and nationalism should never be forgotten. Intense and devoted patriotism is quite consistent with the love of humanity. We should spare no pains to point out the cooperative nature of our patriotism and the analytical dangers of a loose cosmopolitanism. . . .<sup>58</sup>

The patriotism which Lajpat Rai preached was comprehensive enough to include the material, physical and even religious aspects of national life. In upholding the "love of the nation as a whole, regardless of the various religious creeds and castes into which it is internally divided."<sup>59</sup> Lajpat Rai set at naught all theories of regionalism or sub-nationalism that often conflic-

ted with nationalism. The Two Nation theory, which was later responsible for the partition of the country was also repudiated by Lajpat Rai. He believed that India was one nation,<sup>60</sup> according to the contemporary interpretation of the term<sup>61</sup> and therefore opposed the projected and insinuated differences on the basis of colour, caste, creed or vocation. He ruled out race conflict in India because "Hindu and Mussulmans and Christian are all a racial mix-up."<sup>62</sup> Though he did not deny a possible religious conflict, he believed that communal discord was "more artificial than real, manufactured quite recently by interested parties. . . . Even when *bona fide*, it was due to false ideas of religious nationalism and communal patriotism."<sup>63</sup>

Hindu-Muslim unity was the touch-stone of Indian nationalism. Analysing this problem, Lajpat Rai observed with a true nationalistic fervour:

If Mother India is proud of a Nanak, she is also proud of Chisti. If she had an Asoka, she had an Akbar too. If she had a Chaitanya, she had Kabir also. She can as well be proud of her Khusroes, Faizis, Ghalibs. . . as she can be of Valmiki, Kalidas, Tulsidas. . . . Even we modern Indians can be as well proud of a Hali, an Iqbal, a Mohani as of a Tagore, Roy and Harish Chandra. We are as proud of Syed Ahmed Khan as of Ram Mohan Roy and Dayananda.<sup>64</sup>

Lajpat Rai preached this cult of Indianness unwaveringly all his life. He strove to pull down all barriers, including social and religious, in the path of nationalism. His plea that "religious beliefs become a matter of individual personal faith",<sup>65</sup> was aimed at ensuring the integrity of the Indian nation. He declared in 1920:

What then is our conception of nationhood? What do we mean by Hindu-Muslim Unity? . . . It is not exclusive, but inclusive. When we speak of Hindu-Muslim unity, we do not exclude the other religious communities like the Sikhs, the Christians, the Parsees, the Buddhists, the Jains from our conception of unity or from our idea of nation-

hood. The Indian nation, such as it is or such as we intend to build neither is nor will be exclusively Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian. It will be each and all. That is my goal, of nationhood.<sup>66</sup>

Obviously, Lajpat Rai saw with the foresight of a statesman that a multi-religious society like India could achieve its independence only on the basis of unity in diversity and not on the basis of an artificial unity achieved through domination and force.

### On Democracy

In clear and unmistakable terms, Lajpat Rai stated that the British form of representative government could not be accepted as an ideal for India. He also despised the European form of democracy for its gross materialism. In his view, at the same time India could be saved from the economic crisis of Europe.<sup>67</sup> Instead, he adhered to the ideal of social democracy. In Lajpat Rai's view, democracy and socialism could be blended.<sup>68</sup>

Lajpat Rai was personally inclined towards democratic institutions. His contention was that democracy was not at all foreign to India,<sup>69</sup> although India did not have the kind of representative democracy that was in vogue in modern Europe. He believed that democratic institutions depended on the people's right to express their will, either directly or indirectly, in the management of their affairs, and not on methods or procedures. Such institutions had almost always been prevalent in India.

...Even under the most absolute autocracies, the bulk of the people managed their collective affairs themselves. They organised and maintained schools; arranged and paid for sanitation; built public works; provided for watch and word; administered justice, and for all these purposes raised revenues and spent them in a democratic way.<sup>70</sup>

Explaining the case for representative government in India, he added:

...Such a people cannot be said to have always lived a life dictated and held together by force. Nor can it be said with justice that the introduction of modern democratic methods in such a country, among such a people, would be introduction of an exotic plant, with the spirit and working of which it will take them centuries to be familiar.<sup>71</sup>

Democracy was native to India and its reintroduction in Lajpat Rai's view would be continuation of the basic Indian political practices in the past.

In Lajpat Rai's judgment, the best definition of democracy was the one furnished by Abraham Lincoln—"The Government of the People, by the People, for the People."<sup>72</sup> About the constitution of *Government*, Lajpat Rai was not very particular.<sup>73</sup> To him, the test of real democracy was in giving every person regardless of sex, creed, colour and race the right to equality. He said:

...There is little democracy even in Europe and America today. Until recently half of population was denied all political power in the state by virtue of sex. Of the other half, a substantial part was denied that right by virtue of economic status or, to be more accurate, by lack of economic status considered necessary for the exercise of political power.<sup>74</sup>

What Lajpat Rai wanted was the fullest participation of the people in the process of government. And this, in his opinion, was the only way in which democracy should work.<sup>75</sup>

In the spirit of a true democrat, Lajpat Rai observed that political power was nobody's monopoly. The changing historical circumstances would also need a change of leadership in society. His conception of leadership for India was that of a band of devoted political and social workers living like the common people, sometimes working with their hands for their living and sharing with the common people their thoughts, their anxieties, and their troubles.<sup>76</sup> Judging by this criterion, he criticised the Moderates of his time for their prudence and expediency, their regard for personal safety and personal welfare and their lack

of foresight and forethought. He did not spare the Extremists either for their demagoguery, conceit and arrogance.<sup>77</sup>

The high code of conduct which Lajpat Rai set forth for the political leaders reflected his unflinching faith in the democratic traditions. As he stated:

We want leaders who will not make false or equivocal defence whenever the authorities choose to prosecute them. We want leaders, who will not be afraid to attack and criticise the men of property, power and privilege among the countrymen as fearlessly and mercilessly as they do the foreign exploiter, who will realise and preach that what they want is real democracy. . . .<sup>78</sup>

Such a leadership in Lajpat Rai's view was called for to secure freedom for the country.

Lajpat Rai exposed the irresponsible absentee-landlordism of the British Government in denying the constitutional or political rights to Indian people and in carving out India's fiscal policy for the benefit of the British interests rather than Indian masses.<sup>79</sup> He exploded the myth, circulated during World War I, about keeping the world safe for democracy, in these words:

Great Britain and her allies in the War have been objecting to Prussian autocracy, Prussian bureaucracy, Prussian militarism and Prussian junkerism. Yet in India all these monstrosities exist in an extra-ordinary degree and every effort to dethrone them is vehemently opposed by persons who want the world to believe that they are fighting to establish democracy and to enforce the principles of democratic governments all the world over.<sup>80</sup>

Indians, he said, were not satisfied with some posts in the Services and a few seats in the Councils. They were demanding no favours, but their liberties and rights.<sup>81</sup> All questions relating to the future Constitution of India were to "be submitted to the judgment of the Indians. No decision should be imposed on them in the arriving at which they have had no direct share."<sup>82</sup> Thus the sovereignty of the people was an article of abiding faith with Lajpat Rai.

Lajpat Rai contended that there was no point in raising a controversy whether the future Constitution of India should be federal or unitary. According to him:

Let us not be slaves of words. Let us profit by the example and experience of others, but let us decide what is the best for us under the peculiar circumstances of our country. . . .<sup>83</sup>

He further said:

In fact groups that are in a minority in an individual state, can perhaps make a better show in the Federal Government than in their own home States, if they are allowed to pool together for the purpose of obtaining an adequate representation in the Central Government. No Federal Constitution either centripetal or centrifugal, has so far attempted that, but there is nothing to prevent its being considered. The fact is that nowhere in the world has any majority or minority been determined on religious grounds. This vicious practice is only to be found in British India.<sup>84</sup>

### **Towards Self-Government**

In 1917, Lajpat Rai suggested certain drastic changes in the government machinery for paving the way to responsible government. Keeping in view the three existing national schemes<sup>85</sup>—the Congress-League Scheme of December 1915, Gokhale's scheme of February 19, 1915, and Lord Islington's scheme of July 1917, for the future Government of India, Lajpat Rai put forward his own scheme which was an improvement on all of them.<sup>86</sup> Lajpat Rai suggested that the veto power of Secretary of State should be abolished along with the majority of officials in the Viceroy's council. A substantial majority of non-official Indians should be created in the legislature so as to grant full fiscal autonomy to Indian legislators.<sup>87</sup>

He further suggested a cut in military expenditure incurred for Imperial purposes, raising of a national militia of trained Indians, reduction in the numbers of British soldiers, and the establishment of Indian Navy for opening careers to Indians for the defence of their own country. He also said that:

India's contributions to the military strength of the Empire may be fixed by Parliament and thus placed outside the power of the Indian Legislature. The quota thus fixed should be furnished by both British India and the Native States. The Native States ought to bear their proportional share of the burden.<sup>88</sup>

Similarly, Lajpat Rai suggested that Indians should be appointed as Governors of Provinces. He wrote: "Indians are administering Native States. Why cannot they govern British provinces? Why must the Governors be always Englishmen? . . ."<sup>89</sup> For the provinces, he would like the tenure of the Executive Councils to be co-terminus with the tenure of the provincial legislative councils. By way of reforms, he also suggested that the recruitment for services should be by competitive examinations in India. But all appointments, he stated,

requiring expert knowledge like the heads of the Finance, Engineering, Medical, Education Departments, should be made only for a number of years, thus providing for the infusion of new blood with up to date ideas on these subjects. The heads of great departments should not be appointed by seniority, but by selection on merit, such selection including men not in the permanent services. . . . Civil servants have often been pitch-forked even into departments requiring technical knowledge. All this must cease. . . .<sup>90</sup>

These were some of the far-reaching reforms suggested by Lajpat Rai.

For removing administrative corruption, all public officials including Europeans should be accountable to the representatives of the people.<sup>91</sup>

Curiously enough, Lajpat Rai held that self-government should be built from above. He disfavoured the re-establishment of the Panchayat Raj on the ground that the Britishers had destroyed these local institutions to an extent that their revival would lead to isolation and localisation.

With the changed conditions of life, with greater freedom of movement, extended connection with and dependence on



outside life, it is impossible to restore the Village Councils to their old position. All that can be done is to have small village councils that will look after the village sanitation and represent the village in its relations with outside life.<sup>92</sup>

Lajpat Rai was not against the diffusion of power. He preferred decentralisation of power. That would remove corruption and demoralisation.

Power from above, is a two edged sword. It is more demoralising and corrupting than power from below. The former breeds insolence, pride helplessness and narrowed vision; the latter teaches humility, forbearance, constant vigilance and constant sacrifice. . . .<sup>93</sup>

But the process of devolution and diffusion of power, might not solve the problem fully. Even after the recognition of equal rights of the classes and the masses to form their government and run their legislature, the middleman in the form of bourgeoisie would not disappear at once. The transition to the real government of people would take time.<sup>94</sup>

Lajpat Rai favoured prohibition for the moral and material well-being of the community. The raising of revenues by the grant of licences for the sale of liquor and other intoxicants increased the evil of drink among the people. He also suggested the reduction of agricultural land tax and raising the per capita income of the tillers and the labour and the masses.<sup>95</sup>

### **Lajpat Rai, Revolution and Gandhi**

The self-government for India as envisaged by Lajpat Rai was to be achieved through non-violent means. He wanted people to:

. . . Avoid and eschew all kinds of violence of intention, speech or deed. We are neither fit nor ripe for a militant revolutionary struggle. We want a revolution, but not of force or violence. We want a change of heart and transformation of brains. What we need is not violence but firmness, not vacillation but determination, not expediency and time serving but principles and a resolution to stand by them, come what may.<sup>96</sup>

But his political activities before and after the partition of Bengal, leading to his deportation in 1907 caused suspicion in the minds of government as well as others about his sympathies with the revolutionaries. His acquaintance with Sister Nivedita<sup>97</sup> and Sarla Devi,<sup>98</sup> the alleged publication of the reprints of inflammatory speeches of Ajit Singh and Sarla Devi in *the Panjabee* press secretly at night,<sup>99</sup> his record as maintained in the Secret Police Reports,<sup>100</sup> the discovery of two letters of his from Bhai Parmanand along with a copy of the bomb-manual by the C. I. D. in 1909—all these were held against him in order to accuse him of being a violent revolutionary and rebel.<sup>101</sup> Bimanbehari Majumdar also held the view that the way in which large amount of money was deposited with Lajpat Rai in America and Japan by the revolutionaries like Rash Behari Bose and others showed that Lajpat Rai was in the confidence of the revolutionaries.<sup>102</sup>

This opinion was perhaps strengthened by Lajpat Rai himself who showered praises on the revolutionaries for their patriotic deeds and martyrdom.<sup>103</sup> As a student of the histories of revolutionary movement the world over and an admirer of Mazzini, Lajpat Rai wrote his own "Reflections on Revolutions".<sup>104</sup> Some of his main deductions were that a nation, which could not win its freedom and was not prepared, if necessary, to fight for it, did not deserve freedom. He also laid down that freedom won by outside help was only shortlived. The greater the moral and ethical strength of revolutionary movement, the less secretive it should be.<sup>105</sup>

It will be recalled that Lajpat Rai, during his stay abroad at the time of World War I, had rejected an offer of German help for the liberation of India by force.<sup>106</sup> The Germans had offered to send shiploads of arms and ammunition to Karachi, the place proposed for the launching of an armed revolt against the British. But Lajpat Rai refused to consider any other way of freeing India except through peaceful means.<sup>107</sup> He frankly stated that in denouncing the British rule in India he would cooperate with any one, though he would never give himself out either as a revolutionary or as one standing for separation from the British Empire.<sup>108</sup>

The inadequate response of the Indian masses to the revolutionary methods and Lajpat Rai's own sad experience of the Indian revolutionaries in the U.S.A. proved to be decisive factors in the transformation of Lajpat Rai's outlook. He wrote: "I have lost almost all faith in secret work and in secret organisations. I am not all enthusiastic about political revolutions. . . ."<sup>109</sup> Making no secret of his convictions about the inadequacies of violent methods, Lajpat Rai observed in a letter to Gandhi:

. . . Never before have I been more convinced of the futility of attempts to bring about a forcible revolution in India. Terrorism, too, in my judgment, is not only futile but sinful. Secret propaganda and secret societies may have some justification in the Government's desire to prohibit and penalise all kinds of open work, but in the long run this ends in the demoralisation of those who take part in them.<sup>110</sup>

Lajpat Rai appreciated Gandhi's non-violent technique and its relevance for Indian independence.

He wished Mahatma Gandhi all success in his Satyagraha movements. He himself participated in the non-violent non-cooperation movement of 1920-21 and courted imprisonment. Though in full sympathy with the general spirit of the Gandhian programme, Lajpat Rai did not subscribe to the pledge of a Satyagrahi.<sup>111</sup> For this reason, Pattabhi Sitaramayya remarked that Lajpat Rai "was a fighter, but not a Satyagrahi"<sup>112</sup> Lajpat Rai did not believe in the creed of non-violence, but all the same, he recognised the need to remain peaceful. His adherence to peaceful methods was more a matter of political necessity than of political faith. He wrote:

. . . Ethics aside, the policy of using violence or force to oust the British from India is foolish. . . . I am not in favour of taking insults, individual or national, in spirit of meek submission but I am strongly convinced of the futility of force for national purposes. . . .<sup>113</sup>

Although Lajpat Rai greatly admired Gandhi and supported his national programme, he was quite critical of him on some

occasions. The sudden suspension of the Non-cooperation Movement by Gandhi in 1922 made Lajpat Rai drift away from him in politics. Explaining his stand, Lajpat Rai wrote:

Melodrama and an excess of sentimentality have no place in politics. For sometime we have been busy making experiments with schemes which could not possibly be carried out without an immediate radical change in human nature.

Further:

Politics deals primarily and essentially with the facts of a nation's life and the possibilities of its progress in the light of that. . . . A campaign of political emancipation of a nation under foreign rule imposed and maintained at the point of bayonet cannot be based on the attempt to change human nature quickly. Such attempts are bound to fail and end in disastrous action.<sup>114</sup>

In this respect he was one with his closest colleagues like Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das.

Lajpat Rai had reservations on Gandhi's inclusion of the Khilafat issue in the Non-cooperation Movement, too. As he said, "The introduction of religion in any shape or manner in the non-cooperation programme was in my judgment a great blunder."<sup>115</sup> Commenting on the failure of the Gandhian movement, Lajpat Rai further remarked:

I have no faith in non-violence as a creed, but I accept it as a policy, the best under the circumstances. Non-cooperation with the foreign rulers is the only right course for a subject . . . people but non-cooperation on a rigid programme for such a big nation with so much heterogeneity was doomed to failure. . . . We are wedded neither to cooperation nor to non-cooperation. We must do what is best, practical and possible under the circumstances.<sup>116</sup>

### **India and the World**

Lajpat Rai viewed the Indian problems not only from the internal or national view-point, but also from the international

angle. He advised the Indian nationalists to think and act internationally. He said, "It is impossible to separate India altogether from the rest of the world, however the British might try and whatever they might do. For her sons to try to do that is to strengthen their chains and add to the weight which is crushing their country."<sup>117</sup> He felt that the post-war world in 1918 was entering a period of new internationalism and that chauvinistic nationalism was on the decline. He viewed the War as the greatest social mix-up of races and nations, of religions and languages, for mutual destruction unprecedented in history. The World War I, he believed, had produced a revolution in Russia which had given birth to a new order of society there and a new kind of internationalism represented by Bolshevism. He believed that only radical changes in the existing order in India could stem its tide.<sup>118</sup>

He recognised the international importance of India on the political map of the World, saying that geographically:

. . . it is the connecting link between the Near East and the Far East and the clearing house for the trade of the world. Racially, it holds the balance between the European Aryan and the yellow races. In any military conflict between the white and the yellow races, the people of India will be a decisive factor. In a conflict of peace they will be a harmonising element. . . .<sup>119</sup>

Again:

With a republican China in the North-East, a constitutional Persia in the North-West, and a Bolshevik Russia in the not remote North, it will be extremely foolish to attempt to rule India despotically. . . . The peace of the World, international harmony and goodwill, the good name of the British Commonwealth, the safety of the Empire as such, demand the peaceful introduction and development of democracy in India.<sup>120</sup>

And for Lajpat Rai, democracy in India meant political freedom. His stand for a free and democratic India was guided by geo-political considerations also. India, he said, occupied a pre-eminent position in Asia too ". . . it is the pivot of the

Orient. As the home of Hinduism, the birthplace of Buddhism, and of the most living centre of Islamic activities, it occupies a unique place in Asia.' <sup>121</sup>

Advancing India's claims to freedom, Lajpat Rai stressed that at no time in their history had the people of India been exploiters of foreign nations. This was a significant fact. It was a tragedy that such a people were bullied by a purely materialistic and imperialistic power. He hated the very word *imperialism*. He said: "... There is no word coined by the genius of man, more vicious, more sinful, more criminal than Imperialism."<sup>122</sup> Lajpat Rai rightly concluded that the British Empire could not continue for long with its imperialistic policies and foresaw the direction in which it should evolve, if it was not to disintegrate:

All that I want for my country is a position of equality first in the British Commonwealth and then in the nations of the world. With our connection with Great Britain, we want to cooperate with those British statesmen and politicians, thinkers and workers who want to convert the British Empire into a British Commonwealth. And I may tell you that the world movements foreshadow coming events and unless the British Empire is soon converted into a British Commonwealth it will go to the dogs as other Empires have gone. . . . <sup>123</sup>

Though he was not very optimistic about the League, he accepted it as a *fait accompli*.

The League of Nations which is at present a humbug, has been established as a fact. It is a fact, and we are a Member of that League of Nations. We want to be a member of the League with a vengeance. . . and not a sleeping partner.<sup>124</sup>

His criticism of the League of Nations was again vindicated by the World history. He said that the League of Nations could not be effective so long as imperialism was in vogue. There could be no world peace as long as the three-fourth of the world's population was left under the crushing heels of militaristic imperialism.<sup>125</sup> He accused Britain of using Indian

soldiers as pawns in the game of imperialism. Prior to the establishment of the League of Nations, he appealed to the world conscience, when he wrote: "In my judgment the first legislation which the proposed League of Nations should undertake is to prohibit the use of mercenary soldiers anywhere outside the land of their nativity. . . ."<sup>126</sup>

Lajpat Rai believed that a world opinion in favour of the oppressed nationalities could be built up through the League of Nations, provided the member countries took real interest in its deliberations.

He appealed to the Indian people to acquaint outsiders with their sufferings and to convince them that they deserved freedom. According to him, a ceaseless effort was to be undertaken in foreign countries to dispel false notions prevailing there about India.

The civilised world's ignorance about India, her culture, her history, her politics and her economics is simply colossal. People hold very peculiar views about us. Our mysticism has sometimes amused and sometimes repelled them; our poetry and philosophy have at times been praised. Beyond this the affairs of India have had little interest for the rest of mankind.<sup>127</sup>

Lajpat Rai was not in favour of seeking foreign help or intervention for the freedom of the country. He well knew that no criticism of the British policies towards India by foreign countries could yield any substantial result. He only sought support from them. He wrote:

. . . I have no delusions on that score. But I do believe that a favourable opinion towards Indian aspirations in countries other than Great Britain is valuable asset in our struggle for freedom. We cannot afford to neglect world opinion except at our peril.<sup>128</sup>

Lajpat Rai also gave a detailed scheme for the purpose of massive propaganda abroad. His scheme envisaged the carrying on of propaganda through : (1) Information Bureaus, (2) Publicity Bureaus, (3) Books, (4) News Agencies and (5) Exchange Professors.<sup>129</sup>

Lajpat Rai wanted to build up a favourable world opinion for another reason also. The Indian revolutionaries working in America, Germany and Japan through their activities had created an impression that Indian people were trying for liberation through force, with the help of a foreign power like Germany. Lajpat Rai, as we have said earlier, never subscribed to this view. He wanted to undo the fallacious propaganda of the Indian revolutionaries.<sup>130</sup>

Whatever our differences at home, I feel that we must sink them to do the work of educating world opinion about our country and our aspirations by concerted, judicious and effective methods. We cannot let ourselves be represented by the militant revolutionaries on the one hand and by the reactionary Imperialists on the other. . . .<sup>131</sup>

He was wholeheartedly in favour of cooperating with like-minded people of the world who were engaged in pushing the world "from the world of unrighteousness into the world of righteousness and equality for every human being, be he of any continent, or any colour, or any caste, or any creed."<sup>132</sup> Lajpat Rai was against the creation of an atmosphere of hatred, distrust and imperialism lest it should recoil upon those who propagated it first.

Lajpat Rai expressed concern for a just world order in these words:

. . . What men of my kind dread is not so much the future of our country as the fate of the world, in case the present hatred between the nations becomes the ruling passion of the East. We dread to think of the future of the world in case India and China imbibe the spirit of the West and join hands with Islam in Central and Western Asia. Let the gods beware of sowing the wind, lest they may have to reap the whirlwind.<sup>133</sup>

Lajpat Rai firmly believed that under modern scientific conditions, the nations of the world would remove all artificial barriers between them and would come closer and closer still. He wrote : ". . . The world is tending to become one family."



Any one who aspires or plans to obstruct the process is a traitor to his country as well as to humanity at large."<sup>131</sup>

Lajpat Rai saw the vision of a Cosmopolitan World where not only the nations, but the nationals too would intermingle and enrich humanity without any bias or hatred. As he observed:

Fundamental human nature is the same all the world over. The differences are mostly social, linguistic, climatic. It is extremely doubtful if racial differences are so radical and well-marked as they are sometimes represented to be. Linguistic and climatic differences will remain, but social and political and economic differences will disappear or at any rate will be effectively lessened.<sup>135</sup>

The experience of the World War I was noteworthy in this regard.

This great war has proved the intensity of existing national differences, but in my judgment it has also established the oneness of humanity and the probability in the not very remote future of world unity and world culture. The whole world seems to be in the melting pot. . . .<sup>136</sup>

He felt that too much uniformity in the world would be undesirable. The world was more charming in its diversity. But diversity would ultimately give way to unity. He cherished the view that "the interests of humanity lie in reducing the differences and bringing into prominence the points of contact and the similarities."<sup>137</sup>

About the resurgence of Asia and its role in world unity, Lajpat Rai had no doubt. He declared:

The time is near when the Arabs, the Persians, the Hindus, the Chinese and the Japanese will more readily talk of the things common to them, than of their differences . . . the unity of Asia is going to be brought about by Europe and European thought. Fear of Europe will unite Asia, and then the fear of Asia in its turn will bring about the unity of Europe and Asia. With Europe and Asia united, the world becomes one. America is a child of

Europe, and native of Africa is more less a child of Asia. Both of them, in their own ways, are going to help the process of assimilation, integration and unity. Out of the World War (or it may be Wars) will emerge World Unity.<sup>138</sup>

The following estimates, one by Josiah C. Wedgwood and the other by J. S. Bains, best sum up his political ideas:

*Wedgwood* : "I suppose Lajpat Rai would describe himself as one of those he groups under Advocates of Constructive Nationalism; but he is not a Nationalist as we know the species; he is a hater of injustice and oppression, a living flame, of which Liberalism of all ages will justly be proud."<sup>139</sup>

*J. S. Bains*: "Though his primary search had been for India's independence and to create world public opinion for the achievement of this goal, his writings and speeches give an indication, though vague and incomplete, of the kind of an international order which he felt would be conducive to the establishment of international peace and security and for the promotion of human progress."<sup>140</sup>

## Notes

1. See Bimanbehari Majumdar, *Militant Nationalism in India* (General Printers and Publishers, Calcutta, 1966), pp. 16-17.

2. See M. A. Buch, *Rise and Growth of Indian Militant Nationalism* (Good Companions, Baroda, 1940), p. 156. Also see Theodore L. Shay, *The Legacy of the Lokamanya* (Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1956), p. 49. He writes that these Extremists represented "the spirit of the Indian independence movement which was typical of the twentieth century, whereas the Moderates were inspired by and acted in terms of the political philosophy of British liberalism of the nineteenth century."

3. For the full text of Lajpat Rai's speech see *Report of the Twenty-First Indian National Congress, Banaras, 1905*, pp. 73-5.

4. *Militant Nationalism in India*, op. cit., p. 65.

5. *The Panjabee*, October 13, 1906.

6. See *The Tribune*, November 14, 1929.

7. See K. P. Karunakaran, *Continuity and Change in Indian Politics* (People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1964), p. 90.

8. See A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Popular Book Depot, Bombay, Third Edition, 1959), p. 303.

9. See Lajpat Rai, *The Message of the Bhagvad-Gita* (Indian Press, Allahabad, 1908), pp. 12-13.

10. Generalisations are often erroneous. One such faulty example is found in depicting Lajpat Rai as a religio-mystic thinker as J. N. Vajpeyi has done in writing, "The Nationalists like Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose, Lala Lajpat Rai, B. C. Pal and others gave a religious colour to the liberation movement. In the love of their mother country they saw the manifestation of the Divine Spirit." Cf. J. N. Vajpeyi, *The Extremist Movement in India* (Chugh Publications, Allahabad, 1974), p. 95.

11. Lajpat Rai quoted in M. A. Buch, *Rise and Growth of Indian Militant Nationalism*, op. cit., pp. 64-5.

12. Ibid.

13. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, op. cit., pp. 138-9.

14. Ibid., pp. 169-70.

15. *Rise and Growth of Indian Militant Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 91.

16. Ibid., p. 101.

17. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, op. cit., pp. 169-70.

18. *Indian Review*, January 1907.

19. Lajpat Rai: *Ideals of Non-Cooperation and other Essays* (S. Ganesan, Madras, 1924), p. 98.

20. See *The Modern Review*, March 1907.

21. *The Call to Young India* op. cit., p. 62.

22. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, op. cit., p. 86.

23. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. I*, op. cit., p. 247.

24. *Modern Review*, March 1907.

25. Ibid.

26. Lajpat Rai's Presidential address at the All-India Swadeshi Conference, 1907. See *Surat Congress and Conferences*, op. cit., p. 5.

27. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 43.

28. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. I*, op. cit., p. 395. "Farewell to America", November 1919.

29. Lajpat Rai : *Ideals of Non-Cooperation and other Essays*, op. cit., p. 78.

30. Ibid., pp. 79-80.

31. Lajpat Rai quoted in M. R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life, Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 268.

32. Lajpat Rai : *Ideals of Non-Cooperation and other Essays*, op. cit., p. 80.

33. *The People*, October 11, 1928.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 26.

38. Lajpat Rai quoted in *The Indian Nation Builders, Part-I* (Ganesh and Co. Madras, n.d., Fourth Edition), p. 310.

39. See *Lala Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit., p. 184.

40. See Lajpat Rai, *The Evolution of Japan and Other Papers* (R. Chatterjee, Corn wallis Street, Calcutta, 1919), p. 96.

41. Ibid., pp. 7-8.

42. Lajpat Rai, *The Problem of National Education in India* (Publications Division, Delhi, 1966), p. 61.

43. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, op. cit., p. 221.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., p. 222.

46. *The Arya Gazette*, December 15, 1904.

47. Lajpat Rai quoted in Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East* (George Routledge and Sons, London, 1929), p. 172.

48. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, op. cit., p. 232.

49. Ibid., p. 233.

50. *The Problem of National Education in India*, op. cit., p. 63.

51. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 52.

52. Ibid.

53. *The Problem of National Education in India*, op. cit., p. 57.

54. Ibid. Also see B. S. Sharma, "Lala Lajpat Rai on State, Society And Individual", Seminar Papers on *Lajpat Rai and Relevance of his Ideas Today*, Punjab University, Chandigarh, November 17-19, 1972, (Mimeographed). He observes :

"Lajpat Rai's career and thought focuses attention on the important role a statesman has to play in translating the political goals fixed by society into actuality. In this respects we are cautioned against rationalist approach in politics and reminded of the need of realism without sacrificing moral values."

55. Lajpat Rai, *The Political Future of India* (B. W. Huebsch, New York, 1919), p. 197.

56. Ibid., p. 30.

57. *The Problem of National Educational in India*, op. cit., p. 57.

58. Ibid., p. 58.

59. Ibid., p. 59.

60. In *An Open Letter to the Right Honourable David Lloyd George*, Lajpat Rai said :

"In defending your conduct you urge that India is not a nation. . . . The bulk of the population follow the same religion, speak the same language and belong to the same race. Remember, please, that I do not admit that India is not a nation."

*Writings and Speeches, Vol. I*, op. cit., p. 276. The 'Open Letter' was issued from New York on June 13, 1917. Its entry into India was banned by the Government of India under the Press Act and the Sea Customs Act 1878. See *NAI*, Home Political, November 1920, Nos. 192-194, Part. A.

61. See Frederick M. Watkins, *The Age of Ideology : Political Thought*

1750 *To The Present*. (Prentice-Hall of India (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1965), p. 38. He writes : "... A nation is a group that, for whatever reason, is so conscious of its distinctiveness that it resents being governed by foreigners and demands a sovereign state of its own."

62. *The Problem of National Education in India*, op. cit., p. 60.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid., p. 62.

65. Ibid.

66. Lajpat Rai : *Ideals of Non-Cooperation and other Essays*, op. cit., p. 75.

67. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 168.

68. Ibid.

69. *The Political Future of India*, op. cit., p. 29.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid., p. 17.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. See *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., pp. 81-2.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid., p. 82.

79. *Writings and Speeches*, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 287-8. *An Open Letter to Edwin Montagu*, September 15, 1917.

80. Ibid., p. 288.

81. Ibid., p. 290.

82. Ibid., p. 293.

83. *The People*, October 25, 1928.

84. Ibid., Nov. 1, 1928.

85. Ibid., pp. 291, 407-8.

86. Ibid., p. 291.

87. Ibid., pp. 293-4.

88. Ibid., p. 295.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid., pp. 297-8.

91. Lajpat Rai observed:

"... The transport and the Commissariat services, the public works and the medical departments are corrupt 'to the core' because the service codes of honour protect them from exposure . . . Besides, all complaints of corruption and bribery against European officers are systematically discouraged by the authorities. It is felt that the exposure of a European official affects the Government prestige. . . . It may be said to the honour of the Indian Civil Service that the vast majority of them are free from financial corruption; but can the same be said of the army departments, of public works and railways, etc., the great spending departments?" Ibid., p. 298.

92. Ibid., p. 300.
93. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 118.
94. Ibid., p. 134.
95. Ibid., Vol. I., pp. 300-1.
96. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 96.
97. See Algurai Shastri, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., p. 105.
98. See *Militant Nationalism in India*, op. cit., p. 104.
99. *NAI*, Home, Political, August, 1907, Nos. 243-250.
100. Ibid., December 1907, Nos. 44-46.
101. See *Source Material For a History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 935.
102. *Militant Nationalism in India*, op. cit., p. 130.
103. Lajpat Rai writes:  
 "Certain nationalists, inspired whether by political sagacity and prudence or by expediency, may not look with approval upon the assaults made by young men with patriotic motives upon Englishmen or upon Indian traitors. They may disapprove the political conspiracies entered into by them and secret societies organised by them. But in his heart of hearts none can refuse to give them credit for their patriotism, their valour, their sacrifice and their high character . . . it is impossible to deny that the young Bengalis who conspired to murder Gosain and successfully carried out their resolve have earned immortality. A day will come when people will take Wreaths of homage to their statues." See *Lala Lajpat Rai Ji Ki Atmakatha* (Navyug Press, Lahore, 1932), pp. 5-6,
104. See *Young India* (New York), September 1918.
105. Ibid.
106. See Algurai Shastri, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, op. cit., pp. 317-19. Also *Hindustan Times*, September 4, 1963.
107. *NAI*. Lajpat Rai's Personal Diary (June 6, 1919, New York), pp. 3, 5, 13, 15 (Microfilm).
108. Ibid., p. 25 (Para 2).
109. *Autobiographical Writings*, op. cit., p. 219.
110. *India's Will to Freedom*, op. cit., p. 62 originally published in the *Young India*, August 13, 1919.
111. Ibid., p. 63.
112. *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 103.
113. *India's Will to Freedom*, op. cit., p. 74.
114. *The People*, July 5, 1925.
115. Ibid., July 26, 1925.
116. Ibid.
117. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, op. cit., p. 224.
118. See *The Political Future of India*, op. cit., p. 206. Also see *New Age*, September, 10, 1967, for Balaram's article on "Impact of October Revolution on Indian Liberation Movement". He writes, "Lala Lajpat Rai, along with others, hailed the Russian revolution and left imprint on the Indian people."

119. Ibid., p. 207.
120. Ibid.
121. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 119.
122. Ibid., p. 121.
123. *India's Will to Freedom*, op. cit., pp. 86-7.
124. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 131.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid., p. 124.
127. See *The Tribune*, September 4, 1919. Also see *India's Will to Freedom*, op. cit., pp. 42-53.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid.
130. Ibid.
131. Ibid.
132. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., pp. 131-2.
133. *The Independent*, Allahabad, July 21, 1920.
134. *The Problem of National Education in India*, op. cit., p. 31.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid., p. 32.
138. Ibid., p. 33.
139. See Foreword to Lajpat Rai, *Young India* (Servants of the People Society, Lahore, Indian Edition, 1927), p. 2.
140. "Lala Lajpat, Rai's Concept of International Order", Seminar Papers on *Lajpat Rai And Relevance of His Ideas Today*, Punjab University, Chandigarh, November 17-19, 1972 (Mimcographed).

## CHAPTER VIII

### Economic Principles

Lajpat Rai's fight against the foreign government was not motivated by political considerations only. He opposed the foreign masters on economic grounds as well. As a far-sighted statesman he took a total view of the Indian situation and realized very early that while politically, the aim was to attain self-government, the achievement of economic independence was of even greater significance.

Questions of national economy started receiving his attention as early as in 1891. He "discussed the economics of the export of bones and their use as manure for increasing agricultural production",<sup>1</sup> and urged the trading classes of India "to take up export of wheat of Europe which was in the hands of foreign business houses".<sup>2</sup> It was largely through his efforts that the industrial problems of the country became the concern of the Indian National Congress in 1900.<sup>3</sup> These efforts led to the appointment of an industrial committee by the Congress for the improvement of Indian industries.<sup>4</sup> The "Agrarian troubles" in the Punjab in 1907-8, which caused Lajpat Rai's deportation to Mandalay, gave him an opportunity to acquire a firsthand knowledge of the economic plight of the masses. He attributed the lawlessness in the Punjab to the abject and grinding poverty of the rural peasantry.<sup>5</sup>

Lajpat Rai's views on the question of poverty in India and its consequences under the British rule were in conformity with those of William Digby<sup>6</sup> and Dadabhai Naoroji.<sup>7</sup> Dadabhai Naoroji blamed the British Government for the extreme poverty in India. In his *Poverty and un-British Rule* he held that England drained out wealth from India in the name of annual "Home Charges". It impoverished the Indian popula-



tion to the verge of starvation. William Digby in his *Prosperous British India* discussed the economic conditions during the British Rule and held that famines and poverty were the twin products of the British misrule. Digby who had first-hand knowledge of organising famine relief in India in the South, just as Lajpat Rai had done in the Northern part of India, believed that government's famine relief measures were unsatisfactory and damagingly low.

According to B. M. Bhatia:

Lajpat Rai went a step further. He called his treatise devoted exclusively to a study of impact of British Rule on Indian Economy as *England's Debt to India*. What was meant to be conveyed to the reader through this meaningful title of the book that England owed her industrial revolution and consequent prosperity to the resources she had been able to extract from India because of her Imperial connection.<sup>8</sup>

Lajpat Rai, unlike many Indian nationalists, did not hold that India before the advent of Britain was a land of milk and honey and had not experienced poverty, pestilence and disease. He believed that India had her share of prosperity or affluence as well as miseries or misfortunes. There were times in Indian history when India produced best of brains, wealth and economic prosperity of highest magnitude. According to him, it was "futile to pass judgment upon the India of the sixteenth century from the pinnacle of twentieth century standards".<sup>9</sup>

He believed that England's prosperity was largely based on the influx of Indian treasure. England for her gains starved India's industries and impeded the development of agriculture. Its ambitions for territorial expansion in and around India put the populace under the yoke of unending public debt. Unrequited exports hit capital formation hard and further impoverished the people of India. Apart from ruining the booming cotton textile industry in India, the British commercial interests eclipsed Indian shipbuilding and shipping, and monopolised indigo, jute, wool, paper, breweries, rice, iron, copper, manganese, coal, tea, coffee and other products to their advantage.

The British rule in India did not care to alleviate the sufferings of the rural masses by reducing pressure on land, removing rural indebtedness and establishing of agricultural banks. On the other hand, the land revenue settlements further devastated agriculture in India. Moreover, he contended that the fiscal policies of the Government were responsible for the widespread illiteracy, famine, abject poverty of the masses and exacting public works like the Railways to the utter neglect of irrigation facilities. . . .<sup>10</sup> Regarding the famines he said of himself that he had "personal experience in famine relief, having organised private relief works for orphans and other famine-stricken people, during three of the most disastrous of these periods, the famines of 1897, 1899 and 1907-8. He (Lajpat Rai) travelled widely over famine stricken areas in the superintendence of relief, and can assert from personal experience that the 'coarsening and degrading', and the utter demoralisation that results from the British system of famine relief, beggars description."<sup>11</sup>

Challenging the misleading propaganda of the British publicists regarding the economic prosperity of India, Lajpat Rai proved beyond doubt that India was going down in economic scale under the British rule. He established with all the available statistics and sources, mainly the British but partly Indian also, that the fiscal and economic policies of the British Rule in India had turned Indians into paupers. He singled out India for the disproportionate remuneration between the highest and the lowest officials. While the salaries of the high officials, European and Indian, tended to increase, the underpaid lowest servants of the state got the slightest increase with utmost grudge. Unlike the lower officials, the high officials received allowances almost equal to their salaries. Besides, the proportion of Indians in the higher services was negligibly low. Instead of promoting the interests of the masses through welfare activities, the Government spent a large chunk of public exchequer on the Civil Services and on Army—The Englishman preserve.<sup>12</sup> He regarded the floating of a war loan (1917) by the British Government of India to the tune of £ 100,000,000 under the guise of a 'gift' yet another crushing blow to a poor subject people already burdened with large increases of war

taxation. India having helped England in her war efforts with millions of men and money clearly reflected how England had protected India and who had been the greater gainer.<sup>13</sup> Lajpat Rai said:

How these financial exactions are likely to cripple India where millions have died from famine . . . millions have died from plague, where even now thousands die every week from the same fell disease and where the vast bulk of the people are illiterate and so abjectly poor as to excite pity even from the stone-hearted, may better be imagined than described.<sup>14</sup>

He believed that the British method of estimating the prosperity of the country by trade returns, by the amount of gold imported into the country and by the rise in the price of land, was totally misleading.<sup>15</sup> Lajpat Rai said:

The prosperity of a country must be judged by the economic position of the wage earner, and judged from that point of view it can be conclusively proved that the wage earning classes are in effect much poorer today than they were ever before.<sup>16</sup>

### Nationalist Approach

Lajpat Rai's approach towards the economic problems of India was nationalistic. He believed in solving the economic disparities in India through indigenous methods. He wholeheartedly supported the economic weapons of Swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods to fight the alien rulers with. He believed that the British rule in India was responsible for the economic ruin of the country.<sup>17</sup> The Swadeshi movement, he said, ". . . ought to make us self-respecting, self-reliant, self-supporting, self-sacrificing and last but not the least manly. The Swadeshi ought to teach us how to organise our capital, our resources, our labour, our energies and our talents to the greatest good of all Indians. . . ." <sup>18</sup> According to him the western modes of industrialism and capitalism were both to be rejected. They only brought misery to millions of people

as the profit were enjoyed by a privileged class. His deep distrust of industrialism comes out in these words:

If there is anything in European civilisation which we should under no circumstances, imitate and copy, it is their commercialism and class divisions. It would be better for us to remain a comparatively poor nation than to become rich by the wholesale introduction into our country of European industrialism.<sup>19</sup>

### **Khaddar and Swadeshi**

He never entertained the thought of lowering the dignity of human being, much less of the dignity of human labour. "Labour" he said, "must come into its own before the world can be truly democratic. The producers of wealth are the poorest, the most backward and the most miserable of all the human beings composing the nation."<sup>20</sup> The remedy, according to Lajpat Rai, lay in Gandhi's programme of Khaddar and Swadeshi.<sup>21</sup> The Khaddar movement in fact represented the economic ideals of a free and democratic India.<sup>22</sup> Lajpat Rai elaborated the theme of multiple utility of Khaddar for Indian society and national requirements in 1923 in these words:

The 'Khaddar' represents our economic ideal—production for individual needs, for the . . . family . . . the nation; production by hand and with the aid of simple tools and simple machinery, production for use; . . . production in homes and in shops as distinguished from big factories. . . . We will keep competition in check by cooperative methods—cooperation in production and cooperation in distribution. To some people this might look 'primitive' retrogression, going backward. But the world never goes back, though it may seem to do so.<sup>23</sup>

His advocacy of Khaddar did not mean that the forward march of the country towards economic prosperity through industrialisation was to be halted. He knew that "placed as we are we cannot altogether shut out industrialism", and if we cannot shut it out, what we have to do is to be prepared to

face the consequences.”<sup>24</sup> Here as, elsewhere, his realism was unmistakable.

### Use of Technology

Thus Lajpat Rai was in accord with the Gandhian economic programme of Khaddar. And he adhered to this economic programme with his own reservations about the use of machinery.<sup>25</sup> The use of machinery might be reduced to the minimum and wants might be curtailed. But Lajpat Rai did not want to be cut off from the rest of the world. As he said : “We do not want to be isolated. We desire to have the fullest and the most intimate relations with the rest of the world.”<sup>26</sup> These contacts were necessary for the use of technology. Making a plea for the use of advanced technology for the benefit of under-developed countries, he further observed:

The progress in mechanical processes made in the 18th and 19th centuries must be used for the good of humanity, and not for the exploitation of the greater bulk of it by a few fortunate ones in possession of the means to use it for profit, and for power.<sup>27</sup>

On the use of technology, Lajpat Rai did not hesitate to learn from the thoughts of Bertrand Russell and J. A. Hobson, without fully accepting the remedies prescribed by them for the present-day ills.<sup>28</sup>

Lajpat Rai was not wholly averse to the growth of industries in India. Without making rapid economic strides, India could not prosper and deliver goods to the masses.

### No Aping of the West

As early as 1907, Lajpat Rai criticised the tendency of the Western-educated Indians of favouring materialism that was usually found in the West. But he was not against materialism as such. What he condemned was selling away India's heritage for it.<sup>29</sup> He was not against the industrialisation of the country. But he wanted to mitigate the evils of industrialism in India. Lajpat Rai warned Indians against the importation of the European social system to India. That system, he said,

is based on injustice, tyranny, oppression and class rule. Certain phases of it are inherent in our own system. Certain others we are borrowing from our masters, in order to make a complete mess. Wisdom and foresight require that we be forewarned.<sup>30</sup>

### **Need for Indian Solutions**

He had visited industrial centres in England and had met the workers and also the socialist leaders there and he knew the evils that industrialism brought in its wake. He was therefore surprised at the views of the Indian Moderates on the industrial progress of the country. Their ambition to see Manchesters, Liverpools and Birminghams in India was pathetic.<sup>31</sup> He posed a question : "Do we really want the proto types of these cities in India or what they stand for? Do they constitute the glory of England? I have seen all of them, and I have always wished that we may not have them." He further said, "To raise the labour problem, and then try to solve it is hardly the way to do it. To apotheosize capitalism to save us from its evil effects is hardly wisdom. To introduce and develop industrialism and then to build up a Labour Party does not appeal to me."<sup>32</sup>

In Lajpat Rai's view, India could not take European political institutions as a model for her future set up.<sup>33</sup> For, "Europe and America are only democratic in name. They may have a veneer of democracy about them, but the spirit which dominates their life is that of Imperialism. Capitalism is only another form of Imperialism."<sup>34</sup> He knew fully well that "unadulterated and unrelated capitalism and imperialism of the kind which prevail in Europe, and which are being thrust on us against our will, lead directly to Bolshevism."<sup>35</sup> And Bolshevism was a danger that India had to avert.

### **Against Doctrinaire Approach**

Lajpat Rai was a socialist but he did not set much store by slogans and ideologies. He had read the Marxist literature after the Russian Revolution of 1917 and had intimate contact with the radicals and the socialists of England and America. But he would accept only those tenets which could rightly be

applied to the Indian conditions. Discarding socialism as a dogma, he said: "We know that we cannot fly the flag of Socialism. We do not understand Socialism. . . . We do not go by dogmas and doctrines."<sup>36</sup> Which shows that he was not a doctrinaire socialist.<sup>37</sup> To him, socialism meant "a protest against the degradation to which the working part of humanity has been reduced by the enjoying part of it."<sup>38</sup>

### On Class War

He did not subscribe to theory of class-war and the final capitulation of the capitalists before the proletariat.

We are not unaware that according to the judgement of some thinkers, amongst them Karl Marx, a country must pass through the capitalistic mill, before the proletariat comes to its own. We don't believe in the truth of this theory, but even if it be true we will not consciously help in proving it to be true.<sup>39</sup>

On this problem Lajpat Rai maintained a balanced approach. The class war was not to be fought by the Indian labour on the pattern of the European labour. Nor, in his view, could the class war be averted if that involved "any diminution of the status of labour in the democracy we propose to build up. Better war than any degradation of human beings or human dignity."<sup>40</sup> But he posed a larger question—whether the class war was the last word on the question of Labour-capital relations. He asked:

Are not European or American thinkers engaged in a serious attempt to find out a peaceful solution of the problem? Shall we not do well to study that thought to see if it can help us? Should we not ask both capital and labour in India to assimilate that thought and take timely steps to prevent the development of the present differences into a class war.<sup>41</sup>

The possible solution which Lajpat Rai would suggest for the elimination of the class war would be "to put a stop to the further development of this industrialism in India, so that the coming danger may be confined to a limited area and to

limited numbers.”<sup>42</sup> At another place he says “that Indian labour and capital should meet on equal ground and cooperate for the development of Indian industries.”<sup>43</sup>

### **Against Economic Disparities**

Lajpat Rai did not approve of violent methods to bring an end to economic disparities. But the method which he loved most was that of evolution and not revolution. In a “Message to Punjabis” on August 15, 1919, he said: “We are neither fit nor ripe for a militant revolutionary struggle. We want a revolution but not force or violence. . . . Organise the middle class, the peasants and the workers. Follow Gandhi!”<sup>44</sup> His predilection to follow the Gandhian way was certainly remarkable in 1919.

Lajpat Rai dreaded Bolshevism,<sup>45</sup> and as a clear and keen observer of world forces he foresaw :

The only way to meet Bolshevism is to concede rights to the different peoples of the earth now being bled and exploited. . . . India must come into her own soon, else not even the Himalayas can effectually bar the entry of Bolshevism into India. A contented, self-governing India may be proof against it; a discontented, dissatisfied, oppressed India perhaps the most fertile field.<sup>46</sup>

He strongly pleaded for the success of democratic institutions as they would serve as a safeguard against communism.<sup>47</sup> He also pleaded for India’s freedom to live in her own way, carve out indigenous institutions and adopt a democratic way to escape the baneful effects of the economic life and ideals of Europe. Lajpat Rai said:

We want a democracy that will include all the people of India, which will recognise no masters, no slaves, no capitalists, and no mere wage-earners, no landlords and no mere cultivators, no governing, class and no governed. We want a democracy in which all will be brothers, citizens and co-workers.

Talking of the economic status of the people under this system, he further observed :



This does not necessarily mean the abolition of property, or that there will be no rich and no poor in the future Indian democracy that we aim at. Rich and poor are comparative terms. There may be some rich and some poor in a democracy without the evils of a capitalistic society . . . under the load of which modern Europe is groaning.<sup>48</sup>

In fact, in order to achieve the type of social democracy envisaged above he went to the extent of saying that Indians should adopt the aims of the British Labour Party,<sup>49</sup> though he was later to be sorely disappointed with it.

### Duties of the Government

Lajpat Rai firmly believed that the present economic and social order was patently unjust. There was a wide gulf between the privileged and the underdogs. He aspired for an "era of equal opportunity and equal justice to all".<sup>50</sup> He had no faith in the system of "free trade" or the doctrine of *laissez faire*.<sup>51</sup> In fact he wanted the ambit of Governmental activities to be wide enough to include the following duties:

- "1. That not a single member of the body politic suffers from lack of clean and nourishing food, from want of sanitary housing and decent clothing.
- "2. That every child of a mother, whether it be of lawful or unlawful origin . . . shall get not only good food and good clothing, but ample opportunities for education and development on its own lines.
- "3. That every adult must contribute to the sum total of a nation's living. . . .
- "4. That every member of society gets sufficient leisure to devote himself to the cultivation of the finer side of himself.
- "5. That no one kills another unless in self-defence or in defence of society.
- "6. That every one has, according to the need of himself and his family, free access to land, air, water and other natural and artificial products, necessary to make a decent living . . . .

- “7. That no one uses another against his or her will, by force or threat.
- “8. That every one has an equal political status except when by common consent and for common purposes he or she is invested with a higher status for a temporary period.
- “9. That every one is entitled to select his or her own habitat and membership in local group, into which he or she likes to gain admittance, provided he or she does not thereby infringe on the liberties or rights of others.
- “10. That men and women are treated alike with rights and obligations differentiated only by their physical constitutions.”<sup>52</sup>

The formidable list of Government duties reads like a chapter of fundamental rights of a progressive constitution.

### **Private Property**

Regarding private property, Lajpat Rai maintained a socialistic approach and said:

Subject to these principles, if any member of a social group makes more wealth or comes into possession of it by the sweat of his brow he is welcome to have it and enjoy it if thereby he inflicts no wrong on others, jointly or severally.<sup>53</sup>

Lajpat Rai was a champion of the underdog, of both the tiller of the soil and the worker in the factory. Realising “that the ryots and the working men in India and elsewhere are being exploited and robbed by the classes in possession of the means of production and distribution”,<sup>54</sup> he “insisted upon the recognition of the right of every human being to a decent living whether that living is made out of land or from industries”.<sup>55</sup>

Lajpat Rai wanted the nationalist leaders to take up the cause of workers and agriculturists without fear or favour. Many of them, he said, felt shy of attacking the landlords and the capitalists and most of them seemed willing to accept the

overdominance of the few rich who were holding the lion's share of national wealth. He himself fought against both. Criticising the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, he said:

Government of India is a government of capitalists and landlords of both England and India. Under the proposed scheme, the power of the former will be reduced and that of the latter increased. The ugly feature of the scheme is in the possibility of its giving too much power to the profiteering class, be they the landlords of Bengal and Oudh, or the millionaires of Bombay.<sup>56</sup>

These reforms, he was convinced, would not bring in an era of economic justice in India.

### Land Reforms

He supported the cause of Indian farmers against the landed aristocracy. His own ideal was that every tiller of the soil should get "sufficient land or such tenure as will enable him to earn a decent and comfortable living".<sup>57</sup>

He favoured land reforms including distribution of land to landless. He also supported proper ceilings on land holdings so that the land was owned cultivated by genuine cultivators and absentee landlordism was not encouraged. As he said:

The best modern thought is crying hoarse that big landlords holding large areas of land for purposes of profit and income in single hands are not good for any society; that they are like millstones hanging round the neck of nations; and that somehow or the other land should be freed from the incubus of landlordship and made available for cultivation by and further use of those who want to use it for the benefit of the whole society.<sup>58</sup>

Assailing the policy of the British Government in this regard, he added:

Yet our Government is still actually engaged in creating big landlords. I am not speaking of landlords that have inherited lands or bought them in the past. I am referring to

the action of the Government, giving or selling, big areas of land to persons who are capitalists, pure and simple.<sup>59</sup>

He also opposed the policy of exacting excessive land revenue:

The Government has no right to tax a man whose income is not sufficient for the elemental needs of himself and those who are dependent on him. Nor has the landlord any right to squeeze all he can out of starving cultivators, regardless of the fact that what is left is sufficient for him and his family or not.<sup>60</sup>

While arousing the political consciousness of the urban workers, Lajpat Rai hinted that "the wage earning classes in this country gradually realise that their destiny and bread is in their own hands and not in the hands of those handful of people who overlord them."<sup>61</sup> This was the basis of national trade unionism in India.

Lajpat Rai believed that political awakening and economic viability of the Indian masses would provide the right kind of soil for the growth of self-government. He was of the opinion that if the programme for the welfare of farmers and working classes was advanced through progressive legislation, it would create a political and economic consciousness among the people who would then become an irresistible force and the Government would have to recognise their claims to self-government.<sup>62</sup>

### Trade Union Activities

For organising workers and infusing into them a consciousness of their rights, Lajpat Rai took active part in trade union activities. He was one of the pioneers in the field in India.<sup>63</sup> Along with N.M. Joshi and B.P. Wadia, he founded the All-India Trade Union Congress in 1920<sup>64</sup> and was also its first President.<sup>65</sup> In his presidential speech, Lajpat Rai said:

This modern world is characteristically a world of machinery, of steam, gas and electricity. This is a world of mass production, of organised capital, organised industry and organised labour. Organised mass production involves

the organisation of capital and the organisation of labour on a scale never heard before. . . .<sup>66</sup>

He deplored the exploitation of India by the "forces of the organised capital" and considered organised labour as the best "antidote" against it.<sup>67</sup>

In his speech, Lajpat Rai further said that political and economic bondage of India was an obstacle in the way of this "antidote".<sup>68</sup> The organised British capital was responsible for India's economic enslavement. The British economic policy sowed the seeds of colour prejudice among the workers of the West. "To the workers of Manchester", Lajpat Rai said, "was always presented the bug bear of the cheap labour of India. We in India were kept in fear of the competition of Manchester."<sup>69</sup> But this situation was changed by the World War I. Referring to the War, Lajpat Rai remarked:

The war, however, has broken the spell. The workers of Europe and America have now discovered that the cause of workers is one and the same all the world over, and that there can be no salvation for them unless and until the workers of Asia were organised and internationally affiliate.<sup>70</sup>

This was the basis for the international trade union movement.

Lajpat Rai laid particular emphasis on the need for a strong organization on these grounds: ". . . Depressed by religio-social ideals of bygone ages. . . deprived even of elementary knowledge by the extravagant wastefulness and jealousy of a foreign bureaucracy, placed in a condition of abject dependence by the military exigencies of a capitalistic autocracy . . . labour in this country is in greater need of joint action, and of freedom from provincial and district rivalries than anywhere else."<sup>71</sup>

He warned the workers not to rely much on the Government of India. Its apathy towards its own low-paid employees, towards Indian labour in the colonies, and towards forced labour (begar) was established beyond doubt. He, therefore, suggested that "Indian labour must play its part and secure the sympathy of international labour . . . . Indian labour should

cultivate the most friendly relations with European labour without necessarily adopting all the items on the latter.”<sup>72</sup>

Lajpat Rai put a premium on self-discipline and self-control among the Indian labour class. His experience of witnessing some 50,000 railwaymen at strike for about seven weeks, without becoming violent or unlawful, convinced him of the peace-loving nature of the Indian labour.<sup>73</sup> This he considered a healthy sign among the labourers. But the foreign government did not stop its atrocities even when the people were peaceful. This showed, according to him, that

There must be something rotten in the Constitution and nature of Government which needs martial law and Military terrorism to keep such people in hand and to preserve order among them. The action of the Government of India in preventing access to the people of India to the socialistic and labour thought of the world is the least justifiable of all its repressive actions and should be unreservedly condemned.<sup>74</sup>

Concluding his speech, Lajpat Rai told the trade union leaders and workers that Indian problems required Indian solutions. In his view, neither Europe nor Russia could provide any solution to our problems and so there was no need for importing (or applying), “the European and Russian standards of labour”, to India.<sup>75</sup> To those who believed otherwise, he recalled “the message of Lenin to Bela Kun wherein the former warned the latter against the danger of applying Russian standard to Hungary prematurely”.<sup>76</sup>

The goal which Lajpat Rai set for the trade union movement in India was “to organise our workers, make them conscious and educate them in the ways and interests of Commonweal”.<sup>77</sup>

He was also associated with the labour welfare work of the Indian National Congress. In 1920, at Nagpur the Congress appointed a committee on labour relations. Lajpat Rai was one of its members.<sup>78</sup> Here it would be revealing to know the inside story of the Trade Union Movement. Revri writes that AITUC was not an offshoot of the Indian National Congress,

On the contrary, we find that Gandhiji regarded the formation of an All India Trade Union centre as hasty and premature. Gandhi later brought personal pressure and probably discipline on Lalaji. On 30th July, 1921 a meeting of the Executive Council of the AITUC was held at the premises of the Servants of India Society and Lalaji who had been chosen for representation at the ILO Conference gave in in favour of Mr. Joshi. Lalaji with all politeness apologised for his inability to proceed to Geneva due to his bad health and also tendered his resignation from the Presidentship of the Trade Union Congress on the grounds that his residence at Lahore, so distant from the activity of the labour Centre at Bombay, made it difficult for him to attend properly to the work of the Trade Union Congress.

Referring to the 'back stage happenings' he writes:

Rumblings of the fact that the issue had been debated with the Congress High Command can be heard even in the speech of the President of the first session, Lala Lajpat Rai, who said : "The trade union movement in this country is yet in its infancy and it may be said that an all India Congress is rather premature. In my humble opinion it has not come a day too soon."<sup>79</sup>

V.V. Giri and Kaka Joseph Baptista were both wrong in concluding from the above passage that Lajpat Rai thought AITUC to be premature.<sup>80</sup>

Lajpat Rai, later recalling the incident which led to his resignation from the Presidentship of the AITUC, thought that firstly, the Nationalists in India could neither neglect capital altogether nor could refuse to protect the interests of the Indian capitalists specially when the latter were threatened by the rivalry of foreign capital. Secondly, he "believed that the doctrine and programme of Non-cooperation was not in accord with the interests of labour."<sup>81</sup>

Here it is pertinent to note that the Congress politics could not dampen Lajpat Rai's interest and activities regarding the labour movement in India. He espoused the cause of the labour and the trade union in and out of India. He subsequently

attended the International Labour Conference at Geneva on June 2, 1926 not as a government's nominee but as a nominee of the workers.<sup>82</sup>

### **Labour and Political Parties**

Lajpat Rai disapproved of the policy of the political parties and other organs of using the labour as political weapons. The workers were to be helped and educated for their own sake and were not to be treated as tools.<sup>83</sup> As Lajpat Rai observed:

In our eyes organising labour means placing them in a position to meet organised capital on such terms that the latter may not be able to take advantage of their ignorance and their disorganised state.<sup>84</sup>

Lajpat Rai also fought for the cause of labour, trade unions and the unemployed in the Central Legislative Assembly.<sup>85</sup> He successfully moved an amendment to the resolution on the Problem of Unemployment in India.<sup>86</sup> The original resolution stood for investigating the causes of unemployment among the middle class, but Lajpat Rai's amendment expanded its scope to unemployment in general and among the educated classes in particular, which of course included the problem of unemployment among the poor.<sup>87</sup>

In one of his speeches, Lajpat Rai said:

Unemployment in India is pretty general. There is unemployment among the agricultural classes, there is unemployment among the traders and there is unemployment among the educated classes. Practically all classes of people in this country suffer from unemployment. We contend that unemployment has been increased by foreign domination and by the fiscal policy of the British Government.<sup>88</sup>

Lajpat Rai emphasized that the exchange and currency policies of the Government had caused a setback to the traders. The system of education prevailing in the country, also raised an army of the unemployed. The educated persons were uprooted from their paternal professions but were not absorbed



in other vocations of their choice. The system did not encourage small industries, cottage industries or other industrial activities to any great extent.

Only the benefit of the English traders was secured. Then, the banks in the country were prejudiced against the Indian traders. The rate of interest charged was so high that Indian businessmen could not make full use of the available credit. The agriculturists suffered from wants. The increase in agricultural production could not provide for extra employment. The farmers could have been given opportunities to employ their free time in other industrial pursuits. But the Government had failed utterly in this regard.<sup>88</sup>

### Legislation on Trade Unions

On another occasion, regarding the registration of trade unions in India, Lajpat Rai observed<sup>90</sup> that there was no necessity for bringing a legislation to that effect. He was of the view that if some trade unions were registered, the unregistered ones could become victim of repression by the Government. He wanted the legislation on trade unions in India on the lines of the English Statute of 1871.<sup>91</sup> He was convinced that while the Government was following the English traditions in bringing the legislation for the registration of the trade unions, it was not willing to grant those rights and immunities which the English Trade Unions, whether registered or unregistered, enjoyed in England.<sup>92</sup>

He opposed this faulty legislation on two grounds. Firstly, he said that the trade unions were not as new to India as was thought in the official circles. In ancient times too there were trade guilds in India, though not in the same form as they existed in modern times. Secondly, unregistered unions were put to a certain disadvantage.<sup>93</sup> As he stated:

. . . I deprecate hasty strikes altogether; and I am quite conscious that sometimes strikes are formented by people. . . . But when you proceed to take away the protection of the law in their inherent rights and immunities from certain classes of workers, simply because they have not registered

themselves, then I think you are not proceeding on sound and satisfactory lines.<sup>94</sup>

Lajpat Rai wanted full recognition and legal protection for all trade unions in India. He believed that they were the natural concomitant of industrialism. Were there no trade unions, the rights and interests of the working classes would be seriously jeopardised. He observed:

All governments and employers believe, and may be sincerely, that they do everything for the good of the people; and whenever people make or advance any claim for their better and more effective representation in the government or for political rights involving any interference with vested interests, they are in the wrong and the government and the capitalists are always right. The claim is that the government and the employers know the interests of the workers better than they themselves do. We know what value to attach to the argument. . . .<sup>95</sup>

The rights of the workers were inherent in the trade union movement. In this connection, he remarked:

What is a Trade Union? . . . Speaking roughly it is a combination of workers to protect themselves against the combination of employers, for the purpose of furthering their interests and protecting their rights. Now how can their rights be protected and their interests furthered by that combination? By occasional strikes, by collective bargaining . . . and by similar things.<sup>96</sup>

### **In Geneva**

As a representative of the Indian workers at the International Labour Conference in Geneva (June 2, 1926), Lajpat Rai sincerely espoused the cause of the "Labour in the East".<sup>97</sup> He regretted that about one thousand millions of the human race residing in Asia and Africa were represented in the Conference by fewer than half a dozen people.<sup>98</sup>

In view of the numerical strength of workers in Asia and Africa, Lajpat Rai called upon the delegates of European and

American countries to take greater interest in their conditions. Otherwise, the industrialists of Europe and America might take advantage of the semi-developed labour class of Asia and Africa and transfer their industrial and economic activities to these regions to the detriment of the labour and the workers at home.<sup>99</sup>

In the countries which had not yet attained self-government, the problem was still more acute. Lajpat Rai asked the International Labour Conference to exert its moral pressure on those states where the conditions of labour were the worst. He said:

I would desire the International Labour Office . . . to note that the interests of organised labour in Europe and America require that the condition of labour in the eastern countries and in countries where there is a foreign government should at least be brought before the bar of public opinion. . . .The conditions of labour in certain parts of the British Empire, for instance, in Fiji, in Kenya and in South Africa, require publicity.<sup>100</sup>

As regards India, Lajpat Rai pointed out that the slow process of labour legislation and labour reforms was due mainly to the sloth of the foreign government. Criticising the government and the native rulers of India for the prolongation of forced labour he pleaded for the immediate removal of this inhuman system.<sup>101</sup>

### **The Abortive Indian Labour Party**

It will be recalled that at one stage Lajpat Rai was so much impressed by the British Labour Party that he wanted Indians to adopt its aims. He himself formally joined the Independent Labour Party in London in 1924.<sup>102</sup> Later, he was actively associated with a move to establish a separate Labour Party in India, on the model of the British Labour Party. Referring to this move John Patrick Haithcox writes: "In February 1925, Percy F Glading (*alias* R. O. Cochrane), a prominent member of the British Bureau of the Red International of Labour Unions (otherwise known as the Profintern, this organization was established by the Comintern in July 1921), had travelled

to India with credentials from Roy. His primary mission was to make a study of Indian Labour conditions. While in India he helped organise a Labour Party with the noted Indian nationalist Lala Lajpat Rai as President."<sup>103</sup> A sub-committee with Lajpat Rai as its President, was appointed to frame the constitution and rules. But the efforts did not materialise.<sup>104</sup> Revri writes:

Under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai, the first President of the AITUC, efforts were being made to form a Labour Party and the proposal was seriously entertained at the Trade Union Congress during 1925-26. But on the appointment of the Simon Commission, with the exclusion of Indian members and with the presence of Major C.R. Attlee and Mr. Vernon Hartshorn of the British Labour Party in the Commission, it was felt that the British Labour Party had betrayed the confidence of Indian leaders and so the idea of forming an Indian Labour Party, on the British model, was dropped.<sup>105</sup>

Thus by the end of 1927, Lajpat Rai was disgusted with the imperial and colonial policy of the Labour Party in England, and considered the "English socialism as a huge mockery".<sup>106</sup> In his changed opinion, European socialism was not even skin deep.<sup>107</sup> He remarked that:

the Socialists of Europe, with a few exceptions, were not only nationalists but that, in their heart of hearts, they worshipped power over other peoples; that they were not opposed to the exploitation of the weaker people and that in their actual tendencies, they were with Imperialists and the bourgeoisie.<sup>108</sup>

### **Imperialism and Communism**

During a speech in the Central Legislative Assembly,<sup>109</sup> he dwelt upon imperialism and communism. Lajpat Rai said:

I am neither a communist nor one having sympathy with communist doctrine. But at the same time I am not an Imperialist as well and if the question arose of choosing between

an Imperialist and a Communist Government I do not know what should choose, for both are equally bad and vicious and both are equally destructive of the rights of others.<sup>110</sup>

He further said : "Capitalism is only another name of Imperialism . . . . To me it seems absolutely blasphemous for them to talk of the poor cultivators, the poor labourers, the poor peasants of this country."<sup>111</sup> Referring to his previous viewpoint on communism, he remarked, however, that "... Communism and Imperialism stand at two opposite poles. I have absolutely no doubt that the success of communism in this world will mean the destruction of all empires. . . ."<sup>112</sup>

It may be worthwhile to note here that Lajpat Rai's opposition to the Public Safety Bill (1927) was not motivated by any sympathy for the Communists or the Communist infiltrators operating at that time in the country under the guise of either trade unionists or by any other name like 'Moscow Gold'.<sup>113</sup> In fact, a careful study of his speech should remove many doubts about his actual sympathies.<sup>114</sup> His stand on the bill was actually against the omnipotent ambitions of the bureaucratic government.<sup>115</sup> His statement that the bill was aimed "to frighten away people who want to investigate into labour conditions in this country"<sup>116</sup> was not in defence of Bradley, Phillip Spratt, Allison and Hutchison or any other of their associates.<sup>117</sup> Lajpat Rai's principal objection to the bill was that it would arm the government with such repressive powers as could be used against genuine trade union workers and nationalistic leaders.

### An Assessment

Thus, the economic well-being of Indian people engaged his attention from the very beginning of his political career. He studied and watched the economic forces at work around the world. His contacts with the socialist and the labour leaders in England widened his economic and social horizons. The horrors of imperialism and capitalism and the evils they give rise to aroused his indignation.

His one-time ambition to see the industrial methods of the West used for the regeneration of India underwent a change.

He realised that the poverty in India could not be removed by the process of industrialism. He argued for the State assuming greater responsibilities for the economic and social well-being of the people. The state of his conception closely approximates to the familiar concept of a modern 'Welfare State'. He worked for the amelioration of the working classes; and labour welfare became the mainstay of his economic programme.

The rise of Bolshevism and the Russian Revolution raised many new hopes and offered many new solutions for the economic ills of the country. But very soon he realised the futility of these solutions. He had gone through the Marxist and the communist literature but he did not accept either Marxism or the communist methods. The class war appeared to him like a nightmare. He fell back on the Gandhian home-spun cloth. But there was need to maintain pace with the march of scientific progress and industrial activities. Therefore, he desired the adoption of the best in the economic programme of the West and to combine it with the realities of the Indian situation.

He believed in social democracy, and pleaded for social and economic justice to all, under a democratic government. His sympathy for the working classes were due neither to Marxism nor communism. Nor did he join the trade union movement for the purpose of securing mass political following. He took up the cause of labour mainly because of his humanistic outlook.

This was highly resented by those who had ideological and political axes to grind in the labour movement. M. N. Roy wrote in 1924:

Every communist must be an active trade union worker and will endeavour to liberate the labour movement from the harmful influence of the Nationalist politicians like Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru, etc. . . .<sup>118</sup>

Such a criticism was natural as Lajpat Rai did not believe in their creed of class war. His motto was class collaboration. The communists call for the politically motivated unity of the workers all over the world made no appeal to him. His support to the cause of labour was based on humanistic grounds.

To talk of the solidarity of the Labour Movement all the world over, to the Indian workers is simply bunkum. . . . What the Indian worker needs is not dogma but help in organising and in the redress of his grievances against the government and the employers. To feed him on the doctrine of communism . . . to talk to him of international solidarity . . . to ask him to throw himself into . . . international affiliation is to lead him astray.<sup>119</sup>

As regards Lajpat Rai's place in the Indian economic thought, he is hailed as "the first socialist in India",<sup>120</sup> and "Probably the first among Indian nationalist leaders to hail the October Revolution in Russia."<sup>121</sup> A more discerning appraisal is that "His was the creed of a 'humanitarian socialist' and not a scientific socialist in the Marxian tradition."<sup>122</sup> Nevertheless, it is significant, as has been pointed out in a recent study, that the "Punjab Socialist Party which was founded after the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, owed its intellectual origins to his view and was led by his former friends and disciples."<sup>123</sup>

It was characteristic of Lajpat Rai that if he "condemned Western materialism, he sought the benefits of the European Welfare State."<sup>124</sup> His predilection for the concept of a welfare state has already been noted. His broad outlook sometimes led to certain contradictions. If he dedicated himself wholeheartedly to the cause of the Indian labour, he also adopted G. D. Birla as his "political son".<sup>125</sup> This was perhaps an instance of what he called, "idealistic practicability".<sup>126</sup>

But these should not be allowed to detract from his great contribution to modern India. Assessing Lajpat Rai's role and its impact on contemporary India, Hugh Tinker observed :

India today is having to adjust to a new situation in which the under-privileged, the underdogs of the ages, are discovering that they can wrest power from those who have been accustomed to authority. Some of the consequences, which are only now being realised, were anticipated thirty or forty years ago by Lala Lajpat Rai.<sup>127</sup>

This, in sum, is Lajpat Rai's legacy to independent India, especially in the matter of economic progress.

## Notes

1. *The Tribune*, February 5 and 19, 1891.
2. *Ibid.*, May 13, 1891.
3. See *Report of the Sixteenth I.N.C. Lahore*, 1900 (Resolution XII) pp. 3-5.
4. *Ibid.*, (Resolution XXV), p. 79.
5. *Writings and Speeches*, Vol I, op. cit., p. 237.
6. William Digby, *Prosperous British India* (London, 1901).
7. Dadabhai Naoroji. *Poverty and un-British Rule in India* (Swan Sonnenschein & Co. London, 1901).
8. "Lajpat Rai As Agricultural Economist." Seminar Papers on *Lajpat Rai and Relevance of His Ideas Today*, Punjab University, Chandigarh, November 17-19, 1972 (mimeographed).
9. Lajpat Rai, *Englands Debt to India* (Publications Division, India, Delhi, 1967), p. 25. First published by B.W. Hurlisch, New York, 1917.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-118.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 182-3.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 236-7.
13. *Ibid.*, p. xliv.
14. *Ibid.*, p. viii.
15. *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 236.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Lajpat Rai, *England's Debt to India*, op. cit., p. 215.
18. *The Political Future of India*, op. cit., p. 210.
19. *Ideals of Non-cooperation and other Essays*, op. cit., p. 32.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
29. See *Surat Congress and Conferences*, op. cit., p. 35.
30. *The Political Future of India*, op. cit., p. 202.
31. *Ideals of Non-Cooperation and other Essays*, pp. 40-1.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
36. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 83.
37. V.P. Varma, *Modern Indian Political Thought* (Laxmi Narain Agarwal, Agra, 1961), p. 382.



38. *Ideals of Non-Cooperation and other Essays*, op. cit., p. 32.
39. *The Political Future of India*, op. cit., p. 202.
40. *Ideals of Non-Cooperation and other Essays*, op. cit., p. 33.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., pp. 35-6.
43. Lajpat Rai quoted in V.P. Verma, *Modern Indian Political Thought* op. cit., p. 382
44. *India's Will to Freedom*, op. cit., pp. 59-60.
45. See *The People*, September 23, 1928. Lajpat Rai never adhered either to the Marxist or the Communist creed. His most emphatic public disclaimer of this fact appeared in this issues cited here.
46. *The Political Future of India*, op. cit., pp. 206-7.
47. Ibid., p. 208. As he stated :  
 "Europe and Asia must solve their problems, each in its own way, obtaining such support and help from the other's thought and experience as is readily adoptable in the light of its particular circumstances and conditions of life and its own ideals. Thus we can join hands in building a new world, without one imposing on the other and without one dominating and exploiting the other."
48. *Ideals of Non-Cooperation and other Essays*, op. cit., p. 86.
49. *The Political Future of India*, op. cit., p. 203.
50. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 85.
51. *Ideals of Non-Cooperation and other Essays*, op. cit., p. 36.
52. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., pp. 83-5.
53. Ibid., p. 85.
54. *The Political Future of India*, op. cit., p. 53.
55. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 86.
56. *The Political of India*, op. cit., p. 202.
57. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 86.
58. *Ideals of Non-Cooperation and other Essays*, op. cit., p. 82.
59. Ibid.
60. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 86.
61. See *N.A.I.*, Home (Prog.) Political No. 7590, July 1907.
62. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 86.
63. See Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India* (The Perennial Press, Bombay, 1960), p. 37.
64. See *Link*, January 31, 1965.
65. See V.B. Karnik, *Indian Trade Unions* (Manaktalas, Bombay, 1966, Second Revised Edition), p. 31. Also see C. Revri, *The Indian Trade Union Movements* (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1972), p. 85.
66. *India's Will to Freedom*, op. cit., p. 165-6.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., n. 167.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid., pp. 168-9.
72. Ibid., p. 174.

73. Ibid., p. 177-8.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., pp. 178-9.
77. Ibid., p. 180.
78. See V.B. Karnik, *Indian Trade Unions*, op. cit., p. 37.
79. See C. Revri, *The Indian Trade Union Movement*, op. cit., p. 86. (Italics supplied).
80. C.V.V. Giri quoted in Sankar Ghose, *Socialism and Communism in India* (Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1971), p. 55. Also cf. K.R. Shirsat, *Kaka Joseph Baptista : Father of Home Rule Movement in India* (Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1974), p. 27.
81. *The People*, August 2, 1925.  
The famous Trade Unionist Kanji Dwarkadas also records that "the boycott of the Legislatures by the Congress Party and its Concentration on Civil Disobedience and Non-Cooperation left the workers without guidance and aid. From 1920 to 1937, the working classes thus stood completely neglected and what was worse, they were exploited by political parties, without any regard being paid to their well-being and welfare. Unhealthy techniques which had no relationship with trade unionism were introduced, I am sorry to say, by Mr. Gandhi. And these techniques are still being used by the present leaders of the trade union movement—hunger strikes, token stricks and hartals." *Forty-Five Years with Labour* (Asia, Bombay, 1962), p. 291.
82. Ibid., March 28, 1926.
83. *Ideals of Non-Cooperation and other Essays*, op. cit., p. 34.
84. Ibid., p. 33.
85. Lajpat Rai served on the Central Legislative Assembly between 1926-28.
86. See *Legislative Assembly Debates, 1926, Vol. vii, part I* (Jan 28, 1926).
87. Ibid. But Lajpat Rai's support to the 40,000 moneylenders at the time of the passage of the Punjab Moneylender's Bill in 1926 was adversely commented in *The Masses*, June 1926.  
See Sukhbir Chodhury, *Peasant's And Worker's Movement in India : 1905-1929* (PPH, New Delhi, 1971), p. 7.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid., February 8, 1926.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid.
97. See *The People*, June 27, 1926.

98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. See M.N. Roy; *The Future of Indian Politics* (Minerva Associates, Calcutta, 1971, Indian Edition), p. 80.
103. *Communism and Nationalism in India : M.N. Roy and Comintern Policy 1920-1939* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1971), p. 53.
104. See V.B. Karnik, *Indian Trade Unions*, op. cit., p. 46.
105. See C. Revri, *The Indian Trade Union Movement*, op. cit., p. 128.
106. *The People*, December 15, 1927.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. See *Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol. III*, 1928, p. 635 (September 12, 1928).
110. Ibid., p. 639.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid., pp. 639-40.
113. See V. B. Karnik, *Indian Trade Unions*, op. cit., pp. 50-1, for the part of the foreign money, foreign agents and the infiltration of the Communists.
114. The doubts have been raised in Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India*, op. cit., pp. 124-5.
115. See *The People*, September 13, 1928.  
Also Pattabhi Sataramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I.*, op. cit., pp. 327-8.
116. Lajpai Rai, quoted in Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India*, op. cit., p. 124.
117. See the *Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol. III*, 1928.
118. M.N. Roy quoted in V.B. Karnik, *Indian Trade Unions*, op. cit., p. 53.
119. *The People*, March 20, 1927.
120. H.N. Brailsford, *Subject India* (Vora and Co., Bombay, 1946), p. 24.
121. *Link*, January 31, 1965.
122. *Writings and Speeches. Vol. I.*, op. cit. See Introduction, p. lvii.  
Also see Sankar Ghose, *Socialism and Communism in India*, op. cit., p. 8.  
Zafar, Imam, *Colonialism in East-West Relations* (Eastman Publications, New Delhi, 1969), p. 65.
123. O.P. Goyal, *Studies in Modern Indian Political Thought* (Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, 1964), p. 92.
124. Daniel Argov, op. cit., 147.
125. See *Link*, January 31, 1965.
126. See *The Tribune*, December 14, 1927.
127. High Tinke: in Foreward to Daniel Argov, *Moderates and Extremists in the Indian Nationalist Movement*, op. cit., p. viii.

## CHAPTER IX

### Social Objectives

The social objectives of Lajpat Rai were inseparable from his political and economic ideas which have been discussed earlier. Yet, an independent examination of these objectives would necessitate a close scrutiny of the dominant social movements and institutions of his time and their impact on his thought.

#### The Arya Samaj

The most potent influence on Lajpat Rai was that of Arya Samaj. It was from the Arya Samaj that he derived inspiration for his nationalistic and political activities.<sup>1</sup> Besides, he was immersed in the social activities of the Samaj. He also wrote a book on the Samaj which was published in 1915. As Sydney Webb wrote in his introduction to the book, the Arya Samaj was a "protestant reformation of the secular abuses and legendary accretions of orthodox Hinduism with a Puritan simplification of life and a Roundhead insistence on the development of Indian intellectual life and thought."<sup>2</sup> It fought against the Hindu orthodoxy and the Brahmanical supremacy for the regeneration of Hindu society.<sup>3</sup> Its attack on the caste system, its stress on equality of opportunity to all, and its condemnation of child marriage, inhuman treatment of widows and untouchability appealed to him greatly. As Lajpat Rai himself observed, "The Arya Samaj aims at radical changes in the thought and life of the people. It aims at the formation of a new national character on the fundamental basis of Vedic thought and Vedic life."<sup>4</sup> He welcomed this regenerative

spirit of the Samaj and engaged himself in the task of social reforms.

Another thing about the Arya Samaj which appealed to him was its emphasis on self-confidence and self-help, which greatly inspired the Hindu social reform movement. Lajpat Rai strengthened and consolidated this movement. Moreover he gave a new direction to it by correlating it to the forces of the emergent nationalism.<sup>5</sup> The prognosis of Valentine Chirol<sup>6</sup> about the Arya Samaj was not unfounded.

The Samaj was the nerve centre of ardent missionaries whose social activities were based on the twin principles of revival and reform. Unlike his preceptor, Swami Dayanand Saraswati,<sup>7</sup> he did not find much difference between the reformists and the revivalists on the common objectives of social reform.<sup>8</sup> He was of the opinion that even on controversial issues like child marriage, female education, reform of the depressed classes, foreign travel, sub-divisions of caste, etc., both the reformists and the revivalists had more or less similar views. Only the question of widow remarriage was there a deep cleavage between the two.<sup>9</sup>

Discussing the issue of reform versus Revival Lajpat Rai said:

The real significance of these words "Reform" and "revival" if any, seems to be in the authority or authorities from which the reformers and the revivalists respectively seek their inspiration guidance in matters social. The former are bent on relying more upon reason and the experience of European society, while the latter are disposed to primarily look at their Shastras and the past history, and the traditions of their people and the ancient institutions of the land which were in vogue when the nation was at the zenith of its glory.<sup>10</sup>

Both these sources were important in futhering the cause of reforms and Lajpat Rai was willing to take inspiration from both of them. He would, however, "prefer to begin with the latter and call in the assistance of the former mainly to understand and explain what is not clear and ambiguous in the

latter.”<sup>11</sup> This meant judicious use of the Indian and non-Indian approaches for accelerating the pace of reforms in the Hindu social order.

Thus, on social reform, Lajpat Rai maintained a balanced approach. He was against neither the spirit of the East nor of the impact of the West.<sup>12</sup> He held that the ancient Hindus were not basically inferior to any other peoples in the world. But he also knew very well that the wholesale revival of the past was an impossibility.<sup>13</sup> Similarly he doubted the value of the wholesale imitation of the West for solving India's problems. Lajpat Rai wanted to know from the Ranadeite reforms (who called for reforms on rational lines):<sup>14</sup>

Whether they want us to be reformed on the patterns of the English or the French ? Whether they want us to accept the divorce laws of Christian society or the temporary marriages that are now so much in favour in France and America? Whether they want to make men of our women by putting them into those associations for which nature never meant them ? . . . Whether they want to revolutionise our society by an outlandish imitation of European customs and manners and an undiminished adoption of European vices ?<sup>15</sup>

He was keen on retaining the inherent character and nature of the Hindu society even while he advocated certain reforms for its improvement.

In short, on the question of reform, he was for combining rationalisation and nationalisation. He believed that the “society was to be reformed but in keeping with the national spirit”. At the same time he held with Vivekanand that “there was to be no blind revival of the past. Giving undue prominence to rationalism in any programme of social reforms and divorcing it from religion would be dangerous. What Lajpat Rai insisted upon was an integrated view of reforms as such. The spirit of reform should permeate the whole social order and not affect merely parts of it.”

### Social Welfare

His diagnosis was that the lack of social consciousness and social responsibility among the people was greatly responsible for the unhappy social conditions in India.<sup>17</sup> He believed that the social awareness of the citizens had much to contribute to the success of the welfare activities of the state. The real justification of State lay in the Welfare and all-round development of the individuals composing it.<sup>18</sup>

The rapidity with which the Western countries were becoming welfare states, influenced his social outlook considerably, though the sphere of the state in his time was not yet as extensive as it has become subsequently. He saw how, through legislative reforms, these countries were trying to provide every child with nutritious food, healthy housing for the poor, amenities for public health both on preventive and curative lines, protection of children against exploitation, upliftment of women, better marriage laws, old age and infirmity benefits, a living wage, etc.<sup>19</sup>

He realized that the fast pace of social reform in the West was due partly to the political support it gained from various political parties there. But in India both the State and the people were apathetic.<sup>20</sup> Both approached the question "with a great deal of natural timidity. While consideration of policy and finance check the zeal of the former, if there be any, suspicion of too much interference in their domestic affairs affects the other."<sup>21</sup> This apathy could perhaps be explained by the fact that the ruler as well as the ruled functioned in the prevailing framework of a dependent nation.

Lajpat Rai said that "... in India the reformers are working against heavy odds for they have to contend against prejudice and ignorance without absolutely any help from the state. In fact, the alien bureaucracy has devised new methods of perpetuating the old system and making it subserve their own ends."<sup>22</sup>

He realised that religious orthodoxy also stood in the way of reforms in India as social life was deeply influenced by it. This greatly widened the gap between politics and social reforms,<sup>23</sup> thus making the work of social reformers still more

difficult. "So far", Lajpat Rai said, "religions and religious prejudices have been its chief enemies. But for them the progress might have been greater and more rapid; though, however paradoxical it might seem, its success and its achievements, too, whatever they are, are greatly due to the intercession of religious authority."<sup>24</sup> His perception of the role of religion for the advancement of social reform is significant. In this respect again he may justly be compared with Vivekanand who made use of the religious fervour for advancing the reform movement in India.

In fact, religion has always been a factor to reckon with. All reform activities—whether undertaken by the Brahmo Samaj or by the Arya Samaj or by the Sanatan Dharma, or by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan—were based on the religious grounds.<sup>25</sup> Lajpat Rai observed: "In an intensely religious (some might sarcastically call it religious-ridden) country like India it was perhaps impossible to do anything substantial in the way of social reform without the help of religion. . . ."<sup>26</sup> He further said that "Reason, rationalism, science and religion had all to be brought into the field before a substantial breach was made in the citadel of superstition and deep-rooted prejudices."<sup>27</sup> Lajpat Rai's bringing together of religion and science shows that he was far from being a narrow revivalist.

### Depressed Classes

The social conditions in India at that time were oppressive. The depressed classes lay crushed under the heels of injustice and cruelty. Lajpat Rai frankly admitted that:

the rigidity of the Hindu caste system is the bane of Hindu society. It is a great barrier in the way of the social and national progress of the Hindus. It confronts them at every step and slackens the speed with which, otherwise, the nation would climb up to the heights of national solidarity.<sup>28</sup>

In this respect he was in step with the select reformers of the period of Indian renaissance, who criticised the Hindu caste system. More significantly, his strictures on caste might be



taken to anticipate and supplement Gandhi's famous campaign against the untouchability. Here is what Gandhi wrote about Lajpat Rai in the *Harijan* of January 5, 1934:

. . . It may safely be said that before Hindu India woke up to its sense of duty to the so-called untouchables, the Harijans, Lala Lajpat Rai declared in unmistakable terms, in emphatic language that he always commanded, that untouchability was an unmixed evil and the greatest blot on Hinduism. Even if Lalaji had done nothing else in his lifetime, we Hindus would have revered his sacred memory for the war that he declared against untouchability. . . .<sup>29</sup>

The intellectual and moral status of the community as a whole, in Lajpat Rai's view, could not be raised without the cooperation of all the classes comprising it. The depressed classes were certainly to be raised in social esteem so as to reach a basic minimum whence they could try to achieve a higher place in society. They had been victims of social discrimination for a long long time, and this was their due. Lajpat Rai observed: "The condition of the depressed classes is a standing blot on our social organisation, and we must remove that blot if we are really desirous of securing the efficiency of our social organism."<sup>30</sup> Lajpat Rai further wrote: "All the parts of a whole must be raised, not necessarily to the same level but to a level from which they can, by their individual efforts, talents and achievements, rise to the highest possible position within the reach of the members of the social organism."<sup>31</sup> The removal of the grievances of the depressed classes was thus a most urgent task.

Lajpat Rai treated the problem of the backward classes on the political as well as on the economic plane.<sup>32</sup> He believed that politically, the backward classes, if their lot was not immediately improved, could weaken the numerical strength of the Hindus against the Muslim claim of enlarged representation. Economically, the seclusion of these classes meant that the society remained deprived of so much valuable human material.

"Thus from every point of view" said Lajpat Rai, "whether that of humanity, justice or fairplay, or that of self-interest,

it is the bounden duty of the so-called high caste Hindus to give a helping hand to their brothers of the 'low castes' and raise them socially as well as intellectually. We are living in a democratic age. The tendencies of democracy are towards the levelling down of all inequality."<sup>33</sup>

Referring to the Vedic literature on this point, Lajpat Rai re-emphasised the homogeneity of the Aryan society where caste was interchangeable. Even outsiders could be admitted into high castes and into the highest of social circles after going through certain rites. It was open to individuals, by personal merit of course, to rise to the highest religious and social positions in the society of the Aryans.<sup>34</sup> Thus, according to Lajpat Rai, there was no scriptural authority either, to justify the maltreatment accorded to the 'low castes'.<sup>35</sup>

He chided those Western-educated Hindu elite who talked of equality and liberty but hesitated to sit or dine with untouchables or with members of the other depressed classes. Exposing the hypocrisy of caste Hindus in their treatment of the low castes, Rai poignantly remarked:

As a Hindu you won't touch him; you would not let him sit on the same carpet with you, you would not offer him water in your cups, you would not accept water or food touched by him; you would not let him enter your temples, in fact you would not treat him like a human being. The moment, however, he becomes a Mohammedan or a Christian, without even giving up his ancestral occupation, you are all smiles to him, you welcome him to your home; and have no objection at times to offer him drink and food in your utensils, etc.<sup>36</sup>

Lajpat Rai warned that unless positive steps to ensure social justice were taken, the depressed classes would fall an easy prey to conversion. As long as the evil practice of untouchability existed, the lower classes could not be induced to stay in the Hindu fold and the whole blame for the degeneration of the Hindu community would be laid at the door of the privileged classes of the Hindus.<sup>37</sup>

"A deep-rooted sentiment has so far prevented the depressed classes of Hindus from deserting Hinduism en-masse." But sentiments, he said, "were melting away before the the matter-of-fact civilisation of the West. The time does not seem to be very distant when sentiment will cease to control the desire of the depressed classes to better their social position, if it cannot be had otherwise then by a change of faith."<sup>38</sup>

Such conversion would be a matter of standing shame to the Hindus:

We do not mind those cases of apostacy from Hinduism where the change of religion results from a change of religious convictions, but we have every reason to be ashamed of those conversions that are the direct result of our insolence and inhumanities towards the so-called lower classes. It is high time that our indifference to the lot of the depressed classes ceased and we gave them a new start in social life.<sup>39</sup>

For Lajpat Rai social reform was not aimed at the Hinduisation of the Muslims or the Muslimisation of Hindus or the Christianisation of the Indians. Social reform was pressed into service mainly for the Hinduisation of the Hindus.

Another contribution of Lajpat Rai was his linking of the issue of untouchables with the need for national freedom. He was convinced that no progress was possible in the struggle for national freedom as long as millions of untouchables continued to live in servility.<sup>40</sup>

He believed that untouchability was largely a product of religious and social prejudices against certain kinds of labour. Such prejudices would have to go if the future democracy in India was not to get vitiated. The process of levelling down was to be superceded by the process of levelling up. Lajpat Rai observed: "Our ideas of 'equality' are not based on the theory of 'natural rights' but on that of service. No form of labour is degrading which serves social ends which society needs."<sup>41</sup> He upheld the dignity of labour as well as the dignity of man.

No one should be looked down upon because of his labour or his religion or his race. Every human being who has his home in India, whatever his race or religion or occupation, is an Indian, a member of the Indian Nation, and entitled to be treated as an equal among equals.<sup>42</sup>

The principle of equality expressed here gained acceptance from the nationalist leaders who came subsequently and also from the makers of the Indian constitution.

To orthodox Hindus who considered the inclusion of the programme of the removal of untouchability in the political movement as an interference with religion or Dharma, Lajpat Rai gave a formidable reply. He called them ignorant of the true meaning of religion and its scope. They confused democracy with religious licence. As Lajpat Rai said:

It is impossible to think of a democracy which recognises 'untouchability' as a part of one's individual 'Dharma' or as a permissible form of religion or social prejudice, it is useless to talk of a democratic state as long as this kind of prejudice sways our minds and influences our conduct towards those whom we differ in religion, or whose forms of occupation we dislike.<sup>43</sup>

He said that it:

is sufficiently humiliating that we should have to include untouchability at all in our programme, but to have avoided it for fear of offending the sensibilities of some classes of our countrymen would have been immeasurably worse. It would have been immoral.<sup>44</sup>

The cause of untouchables was not to be taken up on grounds of expediency. According to him, the truth could not be bargained for short term benefits. That would be duplicity and also militate against the moral process of nation building.<sup>45</sup> Nor also were the efforts to remove the evil to be considered an act of patronage towards the untouchables. In fact, he regarded such efforts as an essential part of the duty that everyone owed to these classes. For he believed that: "To evolve a democracy, to constitute a free state, to develop swaraj is

impossible unless all parts of the nation are in a position to make their contribution to the common purpose, the common will and the common work.”<sup>46</sup>

Lajpat Rai suggested concrete and practical solutions for the eradication of untouchability. First, he suggested that temples should be thrown open to the ‘untouchable’. He also advocated the Arya Samajist rite of Shuddhi. He believed that untouchables could be regained to Hinduism by the assumption of sacred thread. “The sacred thread”, he said, “occupies an important place in the eye of the high caste Hindu and to invest the lower classes with this sacred thread is to raise them, at once in their own estimate of their social position, and this is absolutely essential.”<sup>47</sup> Though essentially a ritual, it had a deep psychological impact on everybody.

The second solution, that he suggested, was the spread of education among the depressed classes. That would make them self-conscious and also enhance their social status. “Let us open schools for them”, he said, “and let us send to these schools high class Hindu boys; let us start work for them where they may come in early contact with others. Walls of separation will then crumble down.”<sup>48</sup> Lajpat Rai compared the lot of the untouchables here with that of Negroes in America. Writing on the education of the Negroes he observed:

The Negro is the *Pariah* of America. There is some analogy between the Negro problem in the United States of America and the problem of the depressed classes in India. The two cases are not on all fours with each other, but there is a great deal common in both. The social problem in the United States is in some of its phases very similar to the social problem in India.<sup>49</sup>

He believed that education was an integrating process which could bring the high and the low castes together.

### Educational Reform

On the question of reforms in the pattern of education, Lajpat Rai had catholic views. His plans were based on no sectarian bias or narrow vision.<sup>50</sup> He was not in favour of the

English Public School model of education. However, he was deeply impressed by the American system of education which knew no status-consciousness. He wrote:

In the United States there do not exist any special schemes for the sons of the wealthy people. In this country there is no aristocracy of birth. I mean, no recognised aristocracy. The United States Government confers no titles. But it is not in the nature of things that there should be no grades among men. The United States have men, who are possessed of fabulous wealth. Its Rockefellers, Carnegies, and Morgans can purchase Empires. Yet their sons are educated in the same schools in which the sons of the ordinary day labourers learn their ABC. . . .<sup>51</sup>

Lajpat Rai considered education as the most vital aspect of national life. To him, the future educational patterns of the country could not be framed in haste or with an unmindful attitude.<sup>52</sup> The aims, ends and methods of education were all to be based on sound principles.

Moreover, education must promote the national ideal. Lajpat Rai, who had pioneered the movement for National Education in Punjab in the eighties of the last century, confessed that the "nationalism" which was preached in those institutions was narrow and sectarian. He also stated that the Mohammedan College at Aligarh, the Arya Samaj College at Lahore, the Hindu College at Benaras, all professed to impart national education, but in actual fact reflected the sectarian outlook of the founders. Their nationalism was undisguisedly denominational.<sup>53</sup>

Lajpat Rai thought that the end of education was progress and the test of progress was freedom. And this freedom did not mean renunciation in life. The real salvation could come "in freedom from misery, poverty, disease, ignorance and slavery of every kind, in this life, now and hereafter for our successors."<sup>54</sup> This was the ideal that Lajpat Rai placed before the Indian youth.

Lajpat Rai believed that renunciation was a great spiritual ideal. But its revival in Ashrams and Gurukuls was often misunderstood. In Lajpat Rai's words:

All the great Rishis and Munis of the past had property, as well as families. They preferred to live away from crowds only for purposes of research, for Yoga Samadhi, and concentration of mind on the problems of life. That condition was not an end in itself, but a social means for a social end. It was not a desire for Mukti alone that led them to do it but the very social and admirable desire of helping humanity by a rational solution of the problems of life. Look how this ideal was degraded in later times, until we came to exalt a life of mere Tyag (renunciation), as such, and to place it at the top of life's edifice, as a goal, an end, and a lighthouse.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, far from providing an escape from life, the Ashrams actually fulfilled a distinct social purpose. Indeed, the aim of life is not "killing desire" or an "escape from the pain of rebirth".<sup>56</sup> What Lajpat Rai incessantly stressed was the positive aim of life, of facing the challenge of living in the *midst* of society.

Lajpat Rai thought that the most challenging work of social reform was to change this psychology of the Indian people. He said:

The general prevailing idea of life in India is that of a necessary evil. That life itself is a misery, and misfortune from which it is desirable to escape is so deeply written on the souls of our people, that it is not easy to efface it. What India needs is an earnest widely spread, persistent effort to teach and preach the gospel of life. . . .<sup>57</sup>

The apathy and escapism to the people were a hindrance to enterprise and reform and a full life.

Lajpat Rai hoped that with the advent of Western education, Indians would realise the evils of *Sadhuism*. He, therefore, put emphasis on the widening of mental horizons through a wider contact with the world at large. A life of isolation was a liability in the modern world of change and development. "The attempt to live in the past is not only futile but even foolish: What we need to take care of is the future."<sup>58</sup> Moreover, living in the past prevented the Indian people from culti-

vating a spirit of adventure. He said he had great respect for the ancient Aryans and was proud of their achievements. . . .

but I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that the world has since then advanced much further in knowledge. And if knowledge is wisdom, then we must presume also that the world is wiser today than it was three thousand years ago.<sup>59</sup>

In the face of statements like this, it is difficult to concede that Lajpat Rai was a rank revivalist. In fact contrary to the prevailing notion, he was a critic of revivalism, if that meant meaningless attachment to the past. He was also for discouraging the teaching of Sanskrit and other ancient languages in the schools.<sup>60</sup>

Lajpat Rai said that the aim of every parent and every teacher should be to enable their children and pupils, to be greater and better persons, than mere copies of themselves. For that, he preferred the Western school and college system, under which the boys and girls could be acquainted with the realities of life.

Our boys and girls must not be brought up in hot-houses. They should be brought up in the midst of the society of which they are to be members. They should form habits and learn every emergency. They should learn to rise above temptations and not shun them.<sup>61</sup>

With this end in view, Lajpat Rai preferred co-education in educational institutions. He believed, that "Boys and girls must learn their social obligations when in their teens. To segregate them at such a time is to deprive them of the greatest and the best opportunity of their lives. . . ."<sup>62</sup> He also felt that "our ideas of morality and decency must undergo a change. Our boys and girls must grow in an atmosphere of frankness, freedom and mutual confidence".<sup>63</sup>

Lajpat Rai also suggested a change in teacher-taught relationship.

The future teachers and Gurus of India must learn to set aside the tone of command and authority to which they have hitherto been accustomed. The boys and girls are not clay in their hands to be moulded into patterns of their choice....



They are living beings, products of nature, heredity and environments. . . .<sup>64</sup>

And he further observed:

They cannot be regulated by mere authority, or mainly by authority without inflicting awful injury on their manhood and womanhood. . . . Parents and teachers must learn to respect the child and to have a feeling of reverence for it. No Japanese ever strikes a child, yet the Japanese children are models of reasonableness. . . .<sup>65</sup>

Thus Lajpat Rai defended the modern methods of education, especially, its human concern for the natural development of the child.

With his progressive outlook, he did not hesitate to own the shortcomings of the ancient system of education in India. He wanted to judge things in the light of the scientific truth. In his opinion, one must learn from as many sources as are accessible and be self-reliant and progressive. And he left no place for imitation of any kind either. As he said:

We shall welcome all aid, but we will depend on ourselves only. . . . We do not want to be English or German or American or Japanese; true, we want to be Indians, but modern up-to-date, progressive Indians, proud of our past and aspiring to a greater and nobler future.<sup>66</sup>

This was Lajpat Rai at his swadeshi best.

Lajpat Rai fully realised that it would be a folly to discourage the study and dissemination of European languages, literature and sciences in India.<sup>67</sup> Likewise, he categorically rejected traditionalism. He asked:

Are we going to reject the sciences and the philosophy of the Western scientists and philosophers, because the discoverers of these sciences and the writers of books on philosophy happened to be non-Indians? Are we going to reject Shakespeare, Bacon, Goethe, Schiller, Emerson, Whitman, because they were not Indians? . . . . Are we going to

discontinue learning the modern sciences of medicine, surgery, pathology, hygiene, engineering (civil, mechanical, electrical, agricultural and mining), botany, geology, zoology, etc., because they were so much advanced from the things that we have in our literature on these subjects?

Continuing in a similar vein, Lajpat Rai said:

Then what about the modern sciences of navigation, commerce, banking, insurance etc. ? . . . What about politics and civics and sociology ? . . .

As if that was not enough, he even cited Kautilya's classic in his argument:

Our *Arthashastra* may have been excellent in the good old times . . . but we will be cutting our nose to spite our faces if we fail to insist on the teaching of the modern and the up-to-date *Arthashastra* which controls and orders the economic life of the world.<sup>68</sup>

A mere revivalist could not have such a bold and all embracing approach.

Lajpat Rai also deplored the demand for the revival of *Ayurvedic* and *Unani* systems of medicine, if that was done at the cost of modern medical colleges and modern methods of midwifery and child nursing. He frankly said that:

We cannot go back to the traditional methods of bringing our men and women into the world and then letting them to die by hundreds in every thousand in order to be more truly national.<sup>69</sup>

He had an abounding reverence for science and pleaded for the adoption of scientific method. He said that:

In law, it would be unwise for them (Indian) if they look to *Dharma Shashtra* and the laws of Manu, Narada and Apastamba alone as their guides and rejected modern laws made by legislatures in India and elsewhere. . . . Even on warfare, it would be fatal for Indians to rely on ancient'

bows and arrows swords, and spears with the negation of learning modern military sciences. . . .<sup>70</sup>

This was not the revivalist gospel but thorough-going modernism, if ever there was one.

### Women

Lajpat Rai worked hard to find out ways and means for improving the conditions of women in India. He was aware of their inferior position and of the denial of freedom to them. According to him there were three principal factors that hindered the progress of Indian women and the restoration of their rights. They were, firstly, the ignorance of the masses; secondly, the narrow education imparted in schools and colleges; and thirdly, the deep-rooted sentimental prejudices.<sup>71</sup> All these hindrances were to be removed. Lajpat Rai pleaded for rights unreservedly:

If a man is free to live his life, choose his avocation, regulate his conduct, exercise his rights, perform his obligations, so must a woman be. In order to be able to rise to the full heights of her womanhood, the woman has as much right to education and freedom as man has. There can be no limit to her development; no curtailing of her liberties without harming the whole of society.<sup>72</sup>

About women's right to education and freedom of action, Lajpat Rai said:

The ancient Hindus recognised no limitations to a woman's right to education; nor restricted her freedom of action except what her status as wife or mother entailed on her by virtue of these positions. A nation which tolerates the bondage of her mothers cannot make rapid progress towards freedom of any kind.<sup>73</sup>

Lajpat Rai felt that there was great need for one common pattern of education for both men and women. This education was to be such as would help the complete evolution of their personality. Women were not meant only for rearing children and being obedient wives.<sup>74</sup> Their role in social awakening was great, in fact, second to none.

On the comparative position of the sexes, Lajpat Rai held, on the authority of Havelock Ellis, that there was no such thing as perfect equality between man and woman. He said that "woman is woman and man is man. To say that both are absolutely equal in every respect is nonsense, pure and simple."<sup>75</sup> Individually both man and woman were superior to one another in certain regards. But fundamental differences still existed between them and these could not be wished away.<sup>76</sup> His purpose in highlighting these differences was not in the least to keep the woman in perpetual bondage. He brought this forward as a warning to the reformers lest in their over-enthusiasm they should forget the biological and other peculiarities of a woman's life.<sup>77</sup>

The whole problem of sex relationship and marriage in India also received Lajpat Rai's attention. He wanted that the social life in India should be re-constructed on a scientific basis. In his view, the old norms of sex morality would have to be revised on modern and progressive lines.<sup>78</sup> He considered that marriage laws also required changes in the light of reforms abolishing child-marriage and polygamy and introducing widow remarriage. But here again there was need neither for aping Western modes nor for the whole-sale rejection of the Indian ways. He stressed the need for reforms on rational lines without any biases or prejudices, for the betterment of society and, through it, of the nation.<sup>79</sup>

According to Lajpat Rai, the first condition of a happy marriage was free choice of partner by boys and girls. He did attach much importance to the observation that the percentage of happy marriages in India was greater than in the Western countries. He asked, "What is the test of happiness? A forced happiness brought about by a sense of helplessness and inevitableness is not real happiness. Two young people brought together by the will of their parents find that, willy nilly, they must accept the situation." On the evils of forced marriages, he further wrote:

The girl knows that for her there is no way out of it. Unless she makes up her mind to be a life long widow or is prepared to take a life of disrepute. So she starts by

presuming that her husband and lord is the most handsome, the most virtuous and the only man for her . . . . The devotion of the Hindu wives to their husbands is something sublime, superb. But after all it is the devotion that is born of a feeling of helplessness. The economic dependence is also a factor. . . . <sup>80</sup>

These remarks show, amongst other things, a modern reformer's concern for the economic rights of the woman as a condition for their emancipation.

Lajpat Rai was also quite aware of the struggles of women in the West to free themselves from male domination. He observed:

The Western woman is in revolt. She hates the present domination of men and is in open rebellion against man-made laws of marriage and divorce. It is only when men will realise that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, that a cooperative attempt will be made to arrive at a solution which may be satisfactory to both as well as to the race in general. <sup>81</sup>

Regarding the reforms of the laws of the Hindu marriage Lajpat Rai's attitude was most liberal. He was in favour of inter-caste marriages. When he came to know of the opposition to the Hindu Marriage (validity) Bill<sup>82</sup> moved by Vithalbhai Patel in the Imperial Council, to provide that marriages between Hindus of different castes be declared as valid, Lajpat Rai wrote from New York:

It is with a sense of shame and humiliation that I have read of the opposition to Mr. Patel's Hindu Marriage Bill. It will be a great blow to our prestige and good name abroad if this extremely small measure of reform based on actual legal necessity is defeated on foolish sentimental grounds. They are poor champions of Hinduism who urge its rejection in the name of interests of Hindu Dharma and Hindu Society. <sup>83</sup>

Lajpat Rai remarked that even the Shastras did not recognise stagnation which could be tolerated at only the cost of our political hopes.

Unless we propose to live for ever and ever in our present degraded condition, it is absolutely necessary that our ideas of Varnashram-Dharma should be radically changed. Political democracy is a myth unless it is based on social and economic justice. The present caste system and the resultant restriction on liberties of men and women in the matter of marriage do not tend towards social and economic justice. . . . Delays in social reconstruction must of necessity retard the realisation of our political hopes.<sup>84</sup>

### Conclusion

Thus, Lajpat Rai championed the cause of the down-trodden and the depressed in Hindu society. He also recognised the claims of youth, women and children. The reform of the Hindu society remained his mission throughout life. He was initiated into it by the Arya Samaj which itself did exceptional work in the field.<sup>85</sup> And this influenced Lajpat Rai's social and political activities. The British Government was apathetic towards the nationalistic work of the Samaj.<sup>86</sup> but the nationalistic work was the source of inspiration for Lajpat Rai. And eventually Lajpat Rai became the epitome of whatever virtues there were in the Samaj. Romain Rolland found in Lajpat Rai "the highest type of the Arya Samaj, the warrior, the Knight, 'without fear and without reproach' who devotes his life to the defence of justice."<sup>87</sup>

Starting as a common revivalist, Lajpat Rai was almost transformed by the turn of the present century. In the true spirit of the twentieth century, he brought about a synthesis between revival and reform.<sup>88</sup> He pursued reforms on rational as well as on national lines. He was neither conservative nor short-sighted. He represented that spirit of the emergent and militant nationalism which, with revivalism at its base, broadened the scope of social reform and "stimulated and reinforced the reformer's belief that all groups in society must benefit from the advances that modern India was making."<sup>89</sup> It was neither socially a reactionary resurgence nor did it retard the movement for social reform. It was "the reassertion of the spirit of India".<sup>90</sup>

Lajpat Rai's modern outlook in the fields of family, society, education and religion, combined with a perfect understanding of the East as well as the West, places him among the front-ranking social reformers in India. The remark that Lajpat Rai, "In spite of his rational world outlook and economic philosophy, like some other Extremists, was also a Hindu revivalist",<sup>91</sup> is neither wholly fair nor completely valid. As Dr. V. P. Varma appropriately remarked "Due to his long residence in the West Lajpat Rai had developed a comprehensive outlook and it would be unfair to consider him a pure Hindu Revivalist."<sup>92</sup> It was only as "an ardent admirer of the eternal truths contained in the Vedas (that) Lajpat Rai may be said to be a revivalist and in no other."<sup>93</sup> But at the same time, as Dr. Zakir Hussain pointed out, Lajpat Rai wanted "his people to look forward, not backward, to be realistic and not vaguely and ineffectively, 'spiritual.'"<sup>94</sup>

Lajpat Rai differed widely from those who, like Tilak, believed in political freedom first and the social reforms afterwards. He held that social regeneration was as important as political liberation. In fact in his view, social regeneration should serve as a prelude to political regeneration. The observation that in the sphere of social reform Lajpat Rai "adopted a line more akin to the Indian moderates like Justice Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale than to Lokamanya"<sup>95</sup> would be farfetched. Lajpat Rai's attempts towards social reforms in India would be understood better if they were viewed contextually and in the light of his own militant nationalism. His "social reformist zeal" was inseparable from his ardent nationalist spirit. And his views on social reform in India reveal him to be a rationalist, a progressive and a modern nationalist.

## Notes

1. See *Atmakatha*, op. cit., p. 44.
2. See Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, op. cit., p. xii.
3. Ibid., p. 72.
4. Ibid., p. 254.

5. See *The Arya Samaj*, op. cit., p. 283.
6. See Valentine Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, op. cit., p. 111.
7. See Dayanand Saraswati, *The Light of Truth* (Lahore, 1927), p. 678.
8. See *Lala Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit., pp. 114-28
9. Ibid., pp. 116-17.
10. Ibid., p. 128.
11. Ibid.
12. See *The Arya Samaj*, op. cit., p. 247.
13. See Sankar Ghose, *The Western Impact on Indian Politics* (Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1967), pp. 207-8.
14. Mahadeo Govind Ranade in his Amraoti speech ridiculed the stand taken by the revivalists. See *Miscellaneous Writings of the late Hon'ble Mr. Justice M. G. Ranade* (The Manoranjan Press, Bombay 1915), pp. 180-97.
15. *Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit. p. 126. Also quoted in Charles Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform* (Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 323.
16. See Sita Ram Singh, *Nationalism and Social Reform in India* (Ranjit Printers and Publishers, Delhi), p. 129.
17. *Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit., p. 108.
18. *The Modern Review*, March, 1908.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Lajpat Rai, *Unhappy India*, op. cit., p. 91.
23. *The Indian Review*, September, 1908.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. *The Modern Review*, July 1909.
29. See U. S. Mohan Rao (ed.) *Pen-Portraits and Tributes by Gandhiji*, op. cit., p. 147. Gandhiji further observed, "... Lalaji's great love for Harijans and his equally great services born of that love will be remembered, not only by the millions of Harijans, but by the many more millions of caste-Hindus—indeed by the whole of India. . . . Let us cherish Lalaji's memory in that light and let Harijan-Hindus and Caste-Hindus make a fresh resolve in Lalaji's memory to cleanse society of the curse of untouchability. . . ." Ibid, pp. 147-8.
30. *The Modern Review*, July 1909. Also see *NAI*, Home Political Department Proceedings, Part B, August 1909, Nos. 120-29.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.



37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. *The Indian Review*, June 1913.
41. *The Panjabee*, October 10 & 13, 1906.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. *The Indian Review*, June, 1913.
48. Ibid.
49. Lajpat Rai, *The United States of America : A Hindu's Impressions and a Study*, op. cit., p. 86.
50. See Lajpat Rai, *The Problem of National Education in India*, op. cit., p. 88.
51. Lajpat Rai, *The United States of America*, op. cit., p. 57.
52. *The Problem of National Education in India* op. cit., p. 8.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., p. 9.
55. Ibid., p. 10.
56. Ibid., p. 12.
57. Ibid., p. 11.
58. Ibid., p. 12.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid., p. 14.
61. Ibid., p. 16.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., p. 17.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., p. 18.
66. Ibid., pp. 28-9.
67. Ibid., p. 33.
68. Ibid., p. 29.
69. Ibid., p. 30.
70. Ibid.
71. *The Modern Review*, February 1920.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid., January, 1920.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid., Lajpat Rai was influenced by Bertrand Russell also. Lajpat Rai suggested that the girls should see their proposed husbands before

marriage. "Parties to a marriage must know each other before they are united in wedlock", he added. Among the pre-requisites for a happy marriage, Lajpat Rai included the following :

"(a) the couple be physically fit to become parents.

"(b) that they start with love and attachment to each other, which can only be known by at least a certain amount of social companionship before marriage.

"(c) that they be economically able to make a home." Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. The Bill was moved in the Imperial Council on September 5, 1918

83. Quoted in G. I. Patel, *Vithalbhai Patel—Life and Times, Vol. I*, op. cit., p. 303.

84. Ibid.

85. See H. C. E. Zacharias, *Renascent India*, op. cit. p. 39. He writes: "At all events, the excellent and far reaching work the Arya Samaj has done in the domain of social reform is undoubted. After its founder's death that part of the work indeed was emphasised and great educational and famine relief enterprises added to it, whilst the purely religious propaganda slipped a little more to the background."

86. See Lajpat Rai : *The Arya Samaj*, op. cit., p. 155.

87. Romain Rolland, *Inde*, op. cit., p. 106.

88. Charles Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, op. cit., p. 309.

89. Ibid., p. 338.

90. Sita Ram Singh, *Nationalism and Social Reform in India*, op. cit., See Preface.

91. K. P. Karunakaran, (Ed.) *Modern Indian Political Tradition* (Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1962), p. 362.

92. V. P. Varma, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, op. cit., 385.

93. See the Publisher's Note to Lajpat Rai : *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 15.

94. Zakir Hussain in the Foreword to Lajpat Rai, *The Problem of National Education in India* (Indian Reprint), op. cit.

95. O. P. Goyal, *Studies in Modern Indian Political Thought*, op. cit., p. 87.

## CHAPTER X

### Religious Outlook

Religion played a memorable part and led to crucial consequence in Lajpat Rai's life. His interest in religion could be traced back to his, early days. Cradled in the religions of Jainism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam, Lajpat Rai witnessed the interplay and, co-existence of diverse faiths at home.<sup>1</sup> He had a brief association with the Brahmo Samaj also, before finally becoming a votary of the Arya Samaj.<sup>2</sup> His "decision to join the Arya Samaj marked a threefold rejection : of his father's idealization of Islam; his mother's practice of Hindu ritualism which he regarded as sheer superstition; and the Brahmo Samaj."<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the influence of the Arya Samaj on Lajpat Rai's life and thought was pervasive. He received his lessons in India's glorious past, in the pristine glory of Hinduism, and in self-reliance, national pride and patriotism at the portals of the Arya Samaj.<sup>4</sup> It was under the spirit of national awakening roused by the Samaj that he joined the Indian National Congress. But his was not an uncritical adulation of either the Samaj or its founder.

Lajpat Rai started as a Hindu revivalist, though subsequently he outgrew this early phase. But it must at the same time be emphasized that at no time was he hostile to Islam or Christianity.

Early in his career he was a witness to the political somersault made by Sir Syed Ahmed and he proceeded to expose it.<sup>5</sup> While Sir Syed was obsessed with the fear of Hindu dominance,<sup>6</sup> he pleaded for the non-acceptance of special communal representation and expressed his readiness to be represented by a Muslim. Among other things his outlook was greatly

influenced by the murder of Pandit Lekh Ram, an Arya Samajist preacher, in 1897 at the hands of a Muslim fanatic and the sympathies of the Lahore Muslims with the assailant.<sup>7</sup>

### **His Attitude to the Arya Samaj**

In his book on the Arya Samaj, Lajpat Rai gave expression to the principles and characteristics of the Samaj, and interpreted the ideas of its founder Swami Dayanand. He was proud of his Hindu heritage and he agreed with Swami Dayanand that "Vedic Theism was in many respects superior to even the Theism of Islam and very much superior to dogmatic Christianity."<sup>8</sup> About the spirit of aggressiveness which Swami Dayanand infused among the Hindus Lajpat Rai explained:

Islam and Christianity, the rivals of Hinduism in India were both proselytizing religions; it was therefore necessary to give the same character to Hinduism. . . all that was needed was to create a conscious, active proselytizing spirit, which would take pride in its work. This in brief was the Swami's attitude towards other religions.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly Lajpat Rai realized that such an attitude was the need of the hour. To an extent, Dayanand's ignorance of the languages of the religious books of Islam and Christianity added to his aggressive attitude. But Lajpat Rai was not in favour of antagonising and injuring the religious faith of others in a like manner. He frankly said there were four causes responsible for Hindu-Muslim rift. They were : "(i) the number of seats that each community wished to acquire on the local bodies and the Imperial Council; (2) Government posts; (3) Hindi-Urdu controversy; (4) the propaganda of the Arya Samaj."<sup>20</sup>

His reverence for Swami Dayanand, did not prevent Lajpat Rai from saying that

. . . There is no justification for his followers to continue to hold (this) attitude, and the sooner the Arya Samajists come to this conclusion, the better for them and for the cause. The other religions of the world, including that of India, must be studied in the writings of their best exponents, and always spoken of in terms of respect and

consideration, even if one is unable to accept them as true in their entirety.<sup>11</sup>

At one time when the Arya Samaj was facing the danger of extinction, on the charges of sedition levelled by foreigners like Valentine Chirol,<sup>12</sup> Lajpat Rai came to its rescue with the arguments that Arya Samaj and its founder were not seditionists or anti-British.<sup>13</sup> The real mission of the Arya Samaj was thoroughly nationalistic.

Replying to the charges that the Arya Samaj and its founder Swami Dayanand by their Unhealthy teaching had produced very unhealthy political fruit<sup>14</sup> he said that the principal work of the Samaj was not to oppose Christianity and Islam. Its real strength was in its constructive approach based on reforms<sup>15</sup> and regeneration.<sup>16</sup> In support of the Arya Samaj Lajpat Rai quoted C.F. Andrews as saying : "Today it is by far the most powerful indigenous reforming movement in the North India."<sup>17</sup>

Lajpat Rai searched through the past glories of Hinduism to buttress the present structure of society.<sup>18</sup> Inbued with the spirit of religion and revivalism, he brought them to the service of nationalism and unity.<sup>19</sup> This had also a philosophical significance of its own. It is instructive to recall the words of Amaury de Reincourt:

Awakening can take place only on the plane on which consciousness still dwells. This explains that the most powerful agent of metamorphosis in depth could only be the profound philosophic bent and religious feeling which is so much part of India. . . .<sup>20</sup>

To him, Hinduism was not a vague or an undefinable term. It had the capacity to convey and sustain a consciousness of national unity in spite of its many schools of thought.<sup>21</sup> As a principle of faith Hinduism had the vitality of a unifying force.<sup>22</sup> He maintained that Hinduism in its existing form was as much capable of providing a basis for a religious nationality as its sister faiths, Islam and Christianity.<sup>23</sup> His intensive studies in comparative religion provided him with a broad perspective and he saw the principle of unity in diversity exempli-

fied in every religion. According to Lajpat Rai, in every religion agnostics and sceptics coexisted with the staunch supporters of customary orthodoxy. Sometimes, even those who decried religious scriptures did not hesitate to resort to religious rituals. The agnostics and sceptics also compromised with the rites of traditional religion on occasions like marriage and death. To Lajpat Rai, in respect of diversity the Hindus were not different from the Muslims and the Christians.<sup>24</sup> The oft-repeated inconsistencies in Hinduism existed only on the surface. In fact the best solution of all the religious problems of Hindu India could be found in the Vedas.<sup>25</sup> He thought that just as the Muslims and the Christians dwelt on their scriptures, the Hindus too directly or indirectly, had to accept the Vedas as their highest scriptures.<sup>26</sup>

Viewed in this framework, Lajpat Rai's endeavour undoubtedly appears to be revivalistic. But this did not constitute either disrespect for or antagonism to other faiths. His aim was to impress upon the people of his faith that Hinduism, like Christianity and Islam possessed the magnetic force of keeping its followers united. Hence, a Hindu had no need to feel inferior to a Christian or a Muslim.<sup>27</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Lajpat Rai had tremendous faith in glory of the Vedas. But he was not in the grip of its orthodoxy. Even in the Arya Samaj, he did not subscribe to the orthodox Mahatma group.<sup>28</sup> Exposure to western life and culture helped him to be more catholic in his outlook. His message to the Hindu youth for the rehabilitation of their religious faith in the ancient Vedas was motivated by the ideal of *Swadeshi* in the sphere of *Dharma*. He explained the quintessence of Hinduism from this view-point.<sup>29</sup>

Lajpat Rai was convinced that every Hindu festival, every custom and every *Samskara* performed in India had an unmistakable similarity of faith. A Hindu basically remained a Hindu in his social and religious obligations, no matter whether he lived in the Eastern or the Western part of India. There was an essential unity in Hinduism which was derived from the Vedas.<sup>30</sup> The Vedas he believed, provided Hindu religion with such a granite like structure that a breakdown was not easy.<sup>31</sup>

He criticised those who disbelieved in the sanctity of all ancient scriptures and thereby discarded the ideas of the infallibility of the Vedas. To him, any opinion based on lack of faith in the Vedas was nothing but cowardice. Contrary opinions could be expressed by way of self-criticism but the fundamental notions were to remain unchanged. Any deviation from that Divine wisdom was unbelievable.<sup>32</sup> He observed:

...It is not my intention to suggest that we... (could) learn nothing from the Europeans, but my object is only to show that there is sufficient in our sacred books round which we can rally for social strength and reform, and that with all our eagerness to learn at the feet of European savants and scholars we need neither discredit our ancestors nor indulge in general lamentations for want of social ideals in our past.<sup>33</sup>

This early phase of Lajpat Rai's life was, thus, the natural concomitant of Hindu revivalism found in the Arya Samaj, with which he was so intimately involved.<sup>34</sup> "The Religious reform movement", observes K.P. Karunakaran, "gave self-confidence to the Indian National Movement, but bred, in the process religious obscurantism and narrow sectarianism."<sup>35</sup> Lajpat Rai's interpretation of Hinduism and his glorification of the Vedas contributed to the cult of Hindu revivalism and Hindu Sangathan. Indicating the need of a united brotherhood of Hinduism, he wrote:

As at present situated the absence of such an organisation (Hindu political or semi-political organisation) places the Hindu at distinct disadvantage, and takes away from them, the chances of a united action or of a united expression of opinion upon matters, which affect the unity, prosperity the well being and generally the interests of Hindus all over India. . . .<sup>36</sup>

His emphasis on unity among the Hindus was aimed at developing a sense of nationality to fight a common enemy and a common danger. He wanted the Hindu ideal to be "sufficiently high to cover all, sufficiently broad and extensive to

include all who take pride in one common name, a common ancestry, a common history, a common religion, a common language and a common future."<sup>37</sup> These remarks of Lajpat Rai are sometimes regarded as forming the basis of what is usually known as "Hindu Nationalism".<sup>38</sup> But this was only a part of the story. If Arya Samaj had infused the cult of Hindu Nationalism among its followers, it had also at the same time provided them with a new spirit of political nationalism.<sup>39</sup> Supporting this view, Amaury de Reincourt observes that "there is little doubt today that the great revolt in Bengal in 1905 was largely the indirect result of the Arya Samaj's religious nationalism, and that Dayanand's organisation was the first real concrete nucleus of political nationalism."<sup>40</sup> In its revivalist aspect, the Arya Samaj gave impetus to the identification of nation with the religious traditions of Hinduism.

The spirit of revivalism gave birth to a new school of nationalists, i.e., the Extremists of whom Lajpat Rai was the most illustrious leader. As Jawaharlal Nehru wrote:

There was a spiritual and religious element about all this (revivalism) and yet there was a strong political background to it. The rising middle class were politically inclined and were not so much in search of a religion; but they wanted some cultural roots to cling on to, . . . In every country with a growing nationalism there is this search apart from religion, this tendency to go to the past.<sup>41</sup>

But in his extremism Lajpat Rai was more rational and realistic than co-workers. Unlike Aurobindo Ghose, he "did not give any theological explanation of Indian History; nor was he, unlike Tilak, unenthusiastic of social reforms under the then existing circumstances."<sup>42</sup> The view that the Extremists ". . . sought to build the national movement on the basis of the still massive forces for social conservatism in India, on the basis of orthodox Hinduism and the affirmation of the supposed spiritual superiority of the ancient Hindu or "Aryan" civilisation to modern "Western" civilisation. . . ,"<sup>43</sup> is hardly tenable in the case of Lajpat Rai. He duly recognised the impact of the Western thought and Western institutions, and he acknowledged that some of the "British teachers and professors who taught



in the schools and colleges consciously and unconsciously inspired their pupils with ideas of freedom as well as nationalism."<sup>44</sup> Even the British rule had its brighter side.<sup>45</sup>

Moreover he realized that "It is useless gloating over our past unless we can work out a future to be worthy of that past. We cannot exist on the bones of our forefathers. . . . We must live in the present . . . armed with the armoury of present-day institutions and present-day culture."<sup>46</sup>

And with growing experience and frequent contacts with the outside world, Lajpat Rai's ideas underwent a further transformation. By 1915, he had stopped talking of Hindu Nationalism. In its place Indian Nationalism became the consuming passion of his life and work. Later, he actually disapproved of the use of the term *Hindu Nationalism*. And he had come to realize that "the India of today is not exclusively Hindu. Its prosperity and future depend upon the reconciliation of Hinduism with that greater ism—Indian Nationalism—which alone can secure for India its rightful place in the comity of nations. . . ."<sup>47</sup>

### Hindu-Muslim Unity

Meanwhile, the problem of Muslim communalism and separatism was becoming acute. The attitude of leaders like Sir Syed encouraged this tendency.<sup>48</sup> Though Hindu revivalism ran parallel to the Muslim revivalism,<sup>49</sup> the former found identity with the national unity, while the latter was preoccupied with the cult of separatism.<sup>50</sup> But religious differences notwithstanding, there was hardly any valid reason for the Muslims to institute separate political objectives. Addressing the Punjab Political Conference in October 1906, Lajpat Rai said:

It is my firm conviction that Hindus shall never cease to be Hindus and Mohammedans shall never cease to be Mohammedans. Their religious ideals are so different that it is impossible to expect a complete social union of them in the near future. But that is no reason why they cannot make common cause in political work . . . .<sup>51</sup>

He was of the opinion that the prevailing disunity and mutual distrust in India were promoted, to a great extent, by the

British rule in India. "It is true", he remarked, "that foreign domination is always brought on by disunion but once it has come in, accentuates the same and adds to its volume and intensity, as without it, it loses the chief reason for its continuance."<sup>52</sup> He accepted the phenomenon of denominationalism in India and regarded it as inevitable. But the grant of self-government could not be delayed or refused on this ground.<sup>53</sup> "There are a good many people", Lajpat Rai wrote, "whose views are entitled to the greatest respect from us, who are inclined to think that the world would be poorer and monotonous by the entire removal of these differences. . . ."<sup>54</sup> He himself believed in harnessing these very differences of religion through the greater force of religious tolerance and communal harmony to serve the impending national objectives.<sup>55</sup> He was not pessimistic about the prospects of Hindu-Muslim unity either. In a speech before the Surat Swadeshi Conference in December 1907, he said that he did not believe "that the idea of Hindu and Mohammedan unity is only a phantom. . . . I, on my part, decline to give away to pessimism. Mine is a religion of hope and faith. . . ."<sup>56</sup>

He accordingly opposed the separatist move encouraged by the alien Government between the Hindus and the Muslims in the shape of the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909. He was against separate electorates and communal representation for Muslims in Legislative Councils. As Lajpat Rai wrote:

It is not perhaps so well known as it ought to be in this country that in all matters of inheritance, marriage, divorce, dowry, etc., Hindus are governed by the Hindu law and Mohammedans by the Mohammedan law. The Legislative Councils are not supposed to meddle with or modify the provisions of any of these laws. Besides, even independently of this, there is little or no chance of any measure coming before these Councils by which the interests of one religious community may be more injuriously affected than those of the other.<sup>57</sup>

Lajpat Rai also rejected the plea of separate electorate to the Indian Mohammedans on grounds of loyalty and military service rendered by them to the British Empire. If that was •

the condition for the grant of franchise to the Muslims the Sikhs, the Jats, the Gurkhas, the Rajputs and others who served in the armed forces could also be granted similar privileges.<sup>58</sup> He asked the All India Muslim League they if seriously thought that

backwardness in education, want of organisation, and want of enterprise are substantial grounds for claiming a larger representation than their numbers entitle them to ?<sup>59</sup>

At that time, the British policy of 'divide and rule' was taking firm roots, through the Minto-Morley Reforms. In the context of Hindu-Muslim relations, as M.N. Das opined if the Liberal Morley was placed next to Akbar, the Conservative Minto deserved a place higher than Aurangzeb.<sup>60</sup> Even Keir Hardie reminded Lord Minto that "the Mohammedans have been systematically played off against the Hindus."<sup>61</sup> The seed had been sown.<sup>62</sup> Then, Lajpat Rai raised a pertinent point that if the Indian National Congress was castigated for its unrepresentative character by the Englishman and the Muslim alike, the Muslim League, too, likewise could not claim to be the sole representative of the Indian Muslims.

The Muslims who had nationalist sympathies with the Congress and who opposed communalism could not be claimed by the Muslim League.<sup>63</sup> Reminding the protagonists of Muslim separatism, Lajpat Rai said:

While no sensible man can cavil at the educated Mohammedans agitating for the protection of the rights of their co-religionists within proper bounds, I think, it will be on the whole well in the interests of order and peace in India if, in doing so, they were to avoid saying and doing things which may be calculated to create an impassable gulf between the Hindu and Mohammedans, because to me it seems that goodwill between the two communities is even more valuable than seats on the Legislative Councils.<sup>64</sup>

He also criticised the Congress for supporting the idea of separate electorates for the Muslims. He was more concerned with the Punjab where the Hindus were in a minority.<sup>65</sup> On

the occasion of the Congress session at Lahore in 1909, he remarked that "the Congress stands condemned by the mouth of its own leaders who have given an unqualified support to the despatch of the Government of India, embodying the principle of reparate denominational representation and an excessive representation to a minority on the ground of their "Political importance".<sup>66</sup>

When the intensity of the immediate reaction to Minto-Morley Reforms had abated, the transforming touch of time changed the outlook of Lajpat Rai. He stayed away from India during World War I. Making an appeal to his countrymen in the Punjab, Lajpat Rai wrote from Tokyo, in 1915, to "Close their ranks and sink their denominational differences and jealousies for the common good of their motherland."<sup>67</sup> He pleaded that the "communal and denominational virility" of the people of the Punjab be devoted for the purpose of socio-economic upliftment of the masses. He went on to ask; "... If the Hindu, Mohammedan and Sikh soldier can fight for the Empire shoulder to shoulder in the field of battle why can't the Hindus and Mohammedans and Sikhs at home combine to fight out poverty and ignorance—the common enemies of the whole nation?"<sup>68</sup>

In the meantime, in an "Open Letter to Young Punjab", Lajpat Rai wrote: "Let your Hindu Sabhas and Muslim Leagues take care of themselves. They are to a great extent responsible for all your troubles . . . . Their basis is false, their propaganda untrue. . . ."<sup>69</sup> His call was for a united effort by the Hindus and Muslims. Under the changing pattern of communal relations, he felt that India was gradually progressing towards the goal of Hindu-Muslim unity. Pointing to the spirit of the Lucknow Pact of 1916, he said in his "open letter to Edwin Montagu",

India of 1917 is also quite different from India of 1907. Hindus and Mohammedans have sunk their differences and are making a united stand in their demand for political liberties.<sup>70</sup>

It is obvious that Lajpat Rai's religious views did not remain static but underwent a gradual change. From the creed, he went over to the essence. The gross materialism of the west

compelled him to reconsider the modern and ancient ideals. In a letter to Gandhi in 1919, he wrote :

... What we need is not a creed but *Dharma*. Creed does not help us, ... to find our souls. Our souls we can find only by looking inward and adjusting our outward circumstances to it. ... Religion does not consist of contemplation only, but contemplation and action. ... To attempt to divorce *Dharma* from life is a very very risky affair. ... <sup>71</sup>

Subsequently he supported the Khilafat agitation and welcomed the prevalent Hindu-Muslim *entente*.

With seventy million Muslims, India is the most important Centre of Mohammedan sentiment. With Christians as their present rulers the Hindus and Mohammedans of India are coming to realise that their best interests require a closing up of their ranks. ... The Hindus will stand by their Mohammedan countrymen in all their efforts to revive the glory of Islam, and to regain for it political independence.<sup>72</sup>

In fact he defended the Khilafat movement against the charge of Pan-Islamism. "There is no fear of Pan-Islamic movement, if the new spirit of internationalism prevails. ... Islam is not dead. ... The only way to make it a force of harmony and peace is to recognise its potentialities and to respect its susceptibilities."<sup>73</sup>

In his advocacy of Hindu-Muslim unity, he put Asoka and Akbar, Chaitanya and Kabir, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Swami Dayanand on an equal footing.<sup>74</sup> He also gave up his earlier insistence on Hindi, and instead suggested the use of Hindustani as the national language of India.<sup>75</sup> All this shows that Lajpat Rai was no narrow revivalist, but a nationalist with a broad religious perspective.

On his return to India in 1920, Lajpat Rai addressed a public meeting at Bombay. His speech chiefly dealt with the theme of Hindu-Muslim unity. He observed that "... We shall live in this country as brothers determined to work

together, determined to resist together, and determined to win. That is one of the fundamental doctrines which we must adopt as a first article of our political faith.”<sup>76</sup>

This theme found an echo in his presidential address at the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1920. Indicting Sir Michael O'Dwyer for the Punjab wrongs, he said: “I charge him with having deliberately intensified the policy of ‘divide and rule’ by keeping apart the Mohammedans from the Hindus and both from the Sikhs . . . .”<sup>77</sup> He further declared that the Indian National Congress always believed in an understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims. But the presence of the third party, which was ruling over the two, had always vitiated these efforts.<sup>78</sup>

Referring to the Jallianwalabagh tragedy, Lajpat Rai remarked:

. . . The Hindu Muslim unity was declared to be anti-British for no reason whatsoever except that to Anglo-Indian bureaucrats, it was an unpleasant spectacle. It was not anti-Indian when they freely used the Muslims to denounce the Hindus, but it became anti-British, the moment Muslims began to fraternise with the Hindus. . . .<sup>79</sup>

He was aware of the role of the British Government in creating a “communal triangle”.<sup>80</sup> Lajpat Rai was not alone in his assessment of the British involvement in Hindu-Muslim relations. Later writers like Asoka Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan,<sup>81</sup> Dr. Rajendra Prasad<sup>82</sup> and Mahatma Gandhi<sup>83</sup> also held similar views.

The Hindu-Muslim unity achieved during the Khilafat Movement was, however, short-lived. After the Khilafat agitation had fizzled out the Indian Muslim gave cold shoulder to non-violent non-cooperation, especially in later years. Lajpat Rai was not happy over such attitude of the majority of the Indian Muslims.<sup>84</sup> He had been partly apprehensive about the movement even earlier,<sup>85</sup> but had supported the Khilafat agitation under Gandhi's influence. Putting the utmost emphasis on the Hindu-Muslim unity, he observed:

All that I can say at this stage is that we should go as far as we can, consistent with our duty to the country, even if

we have to suffer. The Hindu-Muslim unity betokens the dawn of a new day in the history of India and it will be extremely foolish and shortsighted to throw this chance which only comes over perhaps in a century . . . .<sup>86</sup>

During his imprisonment in connection with the Non-cooperation Movement, Lajpat Rai found opportunities to study the Muslim literature and the minds of his Khilafatist co-prisoners<sup>87</sup> extensively. His sad experience increased his doubts about the possibility of a permanent settlement of the Hindu-Muslim tension. In a letter to C. R. Das in December 1922, he dwelt on this problem at length:

I have devoted most of my time during the last six months to the study of Muslim history and Muslim Law, and I am inclined to think it (Hindu-Muslim Unity) is neither possible nor practicable. Assuming and admitting the sincerity of Mohammedan leaders in the non-cooperation movement, I think their religion provides an effective bar to anything of the kind.

You remember the conversation I reported to you in Calcutta which I had with Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Kitchlew. There is no finer Mohammedan in Hindustan than Hakim Ajmal Khan, but can any Muslim leader override the *Quran*? I can only hope that my reading of Islamic law is incorrect.

And nothing would relieve me more than to be convinced that it is so. But if it is right, then it comes to this, that although we can unite against the British, we cannot do so to rule Hindustan on British lines. We cannot do so to rule Hindustan on democratic lines.

What is then the remedy? I am not afraid of the seven crores of Mussalmans. But I think the seven crores in Hindustan plus the armed hosts of Afghanistan, Central Asia, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Turkey will be irresistible. I do honestly and sincerely believe in the necessity and desirability of Hindu-Muslim unity. I am also fully prepared to trust the Muslim leaders. But what about the injunctions of the *Quran* and the *Hadis*? The leaders cannot override them. Are we then doomed? I hope that your

learned mind and wise head will find some way out of this difficulty.<sup>88</sup>

Jinnah read out this letter at the Lahore session of the Muslim League in March, 1940 and tearing Lalaji's remarks out of context, he commented, "Ladies and gentlemen, when Lala Lajpat Rai said that we cannot rule this country on democratic lines it was all right, but when I had the temerity to speak the same truth about 18 months ago, there was a shower of attacks and criticism. But Lala Lajpat Rai said 15 years ago that we cannot do so, viz., rule Hindustan on democratic lines. What is the remedy? The remedy according to the Congress is to keep us in the minority and under the majority rule."<sup>89</sup>

The Hindu-Muslim question was further analysed by Lajpat Rai. After his release from jail in 1923, he found that Hindu-Muslim antagonism, especially on economic level, which had been checked in 1921, had burst out again in 1922. He found that the non-cooperation had had little impact on the people as both Hindus and Muslims in the Punjab were competing for military, police services and official favours as usual and even with greater vigour.<sup>90</sup> At this stage, he felt that the Hindu-Muslim problem was so important that it could not be tackled through "temporary patchwork or symbolic treatment"<sup>91</sup>—a view with which, incidentally, Tagore also agreed.<sup>92</sup>

He thought of two solutions to the problem. "The first", he said, "is that of Mahatma Gandhi. He (Gandhi) exhorted the Hindus to show complete trust in the Mohammedans. . . . The Hindus have declined to accept this, and the matter ends there. The second is to come to a definite and abiding understanding about the position which the communalism has to occupy in the future Government of the country, and then to localise the remaining causes of the trouble."<sup>93</sup> For the second solution, Lajpat Rai worked out a National Pact.<sup>94</sup> He wanted to solve the problem with an appeal to nationalism and broadmindedness of both the communities.<sup>95</sup> The principles of Lajpat Rai's scheme might be mentioned here.

Lajpat Rai was in full accord with the principle of granting the broadest possible religious liberty to all concerned. He had



a staunch faith in secularism and he wanted it to be adopted in the future governance of free India. As he declared:

The first article of our future constitution of India must provide absolute religious liberty to all religious denominations, subject only to such restrictions as are inevitable for the general maintenance of law and order. To this must be added the absolute religious neutrality of the future state. . . .<sup>96</sup>

This statement should rebut the oft-repeated charge that Lajpat Rai was a communalist in politics.

When his own province, the Punjab, fell a prey to the communal virus, he was keen on working out an all India solution to the problem through the Congress.<sup>97</sup> He believed that communal organisations were the major hindrances in the path of national unity. And communal institutions imparting education widened the gulf of differences.<sup>98</sup> In fact education must be so oriented as to inculcate a spirit of religious harmony. He believed that something could be achieved through the councils and the local bodies also, if the bureaucracy did not play its dubious game.<sup>99</sup>

According to Lajpat Rai, the Congress should appeal to all the communities to keep their religious work within proper bounds so that no further bitterness and communal conflict was provoked. He personally disliked conversions, "but as long as conversion is a part of religious liberties which we are bound to guarantee to all religious denominations alike we can make no exception either in favour of or against any particular denomination."<sup>100</sup> In the light of this, his view was that the *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* movements had come to stay.<sup>101</sup> But he also expressed a wish:

As for the Sangathan movement, I wish all *Sangathans* and *Anjumans* and communities merged themselves into the National Congress Movement. We should have only one national organisation, one flag and one platform in order to be able to free ourselves not only from foreign yoke, but also from disintegrating forces at home.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, Lajpat Rai attached all importance to the cause of communal harmony. But the recurrence of the communal riots in various parts of India seemed to undermine his faith in it. The Saharanpur riots, in August 1923, came to him as a severe blow. He felt that the highhandedness of the Muslims was responsible for committing the many atrocities on the Hindus.<sup>103</sup> He did not approve of the attitude maintained by Gandhi on such issues.<sup>104</sup> Lajpat Rai forewarned:

If the Hindu-Mohammedan quarrel is not checked, it might engulf the whole country, and might wreck the national movement beyond any possibilities of redemption. I must also protest against another tendency quite visible among certain leaders of insisting that we should love our enemies while we may hate our friends. This is intolerable and makes clear thinking and joint action impossible. We must not add to the numerous cults and sects of this country, by adding one more under the name of Mahatma Gandhi. . . .<sup>105</sup>

Lajpat Rai's criticism of Gandhi was characteristic of his realism. He did not disown Gandhian idealism, but he thought it had serious limitations in the mundane world.

He often went back to history for a searching analysis of the communal problem. He once wrote:

Education in European ideals and standard first gave birth to that intense individualism which 'teaches everyone for himself'. Unsatisfied individual ambition plus patriotic bias plus religious nationalism plus economic needs did the rest. Communal rivalry between Hindus and Muslims for Government favours was first brought into existence by Lord Dufferin and Sir Auckland Colvin. The little spark which was then kindled as an effective counter move against the Indian National Congress has since then been fed by different agencies, in different ways and with different motives. . . .<sup>106</sup>

To undo these wrongs of the British government, Lajpat Rai insisted on the unified cooperation of different creeds

and their adherents. It was to be a lasting arrangement so that even after achieving political freedom, it might continue. This type of unity was not to be detrimental to religious freedom of any faith or creed.<sup>107</sup> He reassured the Muslim brethren that there was no danger of *Hindu Rashtra* in India, since the common objective was to establish a secular state. He stated: "The Indian Nation, such as it is or such as we intend to build neither is nor will be exclusively Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian. It will be each and all. That is my ideal of Swarajya. . . ."<sup>108</sup>

But the Kohat riots on September 9 and 19, 1924, deeply influenced Lajpat Rai's mind. He felt that the British Government had been a total failure in protecting the Hindus against the Muslim fanatics in North-West Frontier Province.

I will assume here for the purposes of this argument that the Hindus of Kohat were in the first instance to blame, and that they had provoked the Mohammedans for a fatal attack on them, still it was the duty of the British Government to keep the Hindus in Kohat, to protect them from further molestation by the Mohammedans at any cost, to restore order and peace and then to proceed to try and punish the guilty persons. . . .<sup>109</sup>

In fact, the Kohat tragedy shook the whole country. To investigate the incidents, the Congress appointed a Committee composed of Gandhi and Shaukat Ali. But both differed widely in fixing the responsibility of the respective communities involved.<sup>110</sup>

Gandhi's approach was well-known. He undertook a twenty-one day fast as a penance for the communal riots.<sup>111</sup> His fast provided an opportunity for calling a Unity Conference of leading Indian leaders from different communities and to set up a Central National Panchayat.<sup>112</sup> About Gandhi's fast, Lajpat Rai commented :

"... For the first time he felt miserable at the thought that he, who had striven his best to obtain Hindu cooperation for the saving of the Mohammedan 'temple' Khilafat, had to see desecration of Hindu temples by tens, in most

cases without any provocation, at the hands of Mohammedans. . . ."<sup>113</sup> Wishing Gandhi all success in his resolve to solve the communal problem, Lajpat Rai suggested that Gandhi would succeed in his efforts only when he "devotes himself wholeheartedly to the understanding of the real causes that underlie the present situation, and scrupulously avoids proceeding on assumptions and presumptions engendered by affectionate relations with friends, and well meaning but ineffectual professions of devotion on their part. He must adopt a scientific attitude towards the question and proceed by scientific methods to find out the root cause of trouble and its possible solutions."<sup>114</sup>

The differences between Lajpat Rai and Gandhi on the subject were notable. Lajpat Rai resigned his position of leadership in the Congress in order to speak the truth "untrammelled by any delicate feeling about the responsibilities of leadership."<sup>115</sup> He was stunned to find, at the Unity Conference at Delhi, that some delegates were obsessed with "absolute rights". "Time after time", he remarked, "it was said that the Mohammedans had an inherent right to slaughter cows and that that right could only be curtailed by their own voluntary sacrifice . . . . I contend that there is no such thing as an absolute right vested in any individual or in any community forming part of a nation; that all rights are relative . . . ."<sup>116</sup> And he believed that in a country like India individual rights were to be exercised in such a way as not to clash with the just rights of others. What was needed was mutual understanding and mutual adjustment. He recognized that

We are a sort of polyglot nation, much less homogeneous than any of those European and Western nations who have had to fight for their freedom. Such a country can never win its freedom, or, having won freedom, can never maintain it unless the various communities composing its people are inspired more by the ideal of duties than of rights.<sup>117</sup>

In the interest of a United India, there should be greater emphasis "on the points on which different religions agree than on the differences that divide them. The idea of a United India

necessarily demands, therefore, the rationalising of religion and religious practices to the farthest extent possible.”<sup>118</sup>

Lajpat Rai regretted that the Arya Samaj, the Mohammedan reform movement, Sikh reform movement and Khilafat eventually brought forth communal disharmony. Lajpat Rai did not spare even Gandhi. He found Gandhi offering “a new life to those Pandits and Maulvis who, before his advent, were fast losing influence among their respective communities”.<sup>119</sup> Gandhi’s attitude did not yield lasting results. Even the Khilafat movement, in Lajpat Rai’s view, should have been supported on political rather than the religious grounds.

According to Lajpat Rai, Gandhi’s move to seek religious sanctions for non-cooperation programme encouraged religious bigotry and orthodoxy causing disunity.<sup>120</sup> Lajpat Rai said he had “seen young muslim gentlemen being vigorously attacked by Maulvis for daring to shave their beards, and all India saw the spectacle of a Muslim President attempting to stop the playing of instrumental music at an annual meeting of the National Congress”.<sup>121</sup>

Lajpat Rai insisted that politics should be divorced from religion. He considered that on a broader plane there was sufficient in both Hinduism and Islam to bring about political unity between the Hindus and the Muslims.<sup>122</sup> Analysing the causes of mutual antagonism and stressing the possibilities of establishing a rapport between Hinduism and Islam, Lajpat Rai commented on the characteristics of these two religions. He maintained:

...Hinduism is the most tolerant of all the great religions of the world. Hinduism does not ridicule or despise other people’s beliefs or faiths; nay it does not question other people’s right to follow their own faiths and attain spiritual satisfaction thereby. . . .<sup>123</sup>

But, unlike Hinduism Islam is a faith of dogmas and doctrines. Every Mohammedan must believe not only in the existence of God without a second (La Ilaha Il Allah) but also that Mohammed was His prophet and that the Quran is his final word. . . .<sup>124</sup>

He further wrote that "Religious intolerance of the severest kind has been a handmaid of . . . the Muslims throughout Muslim history. . . ."<sup>125</sup>

Lajpat Rai regretted that while both the Hindus and the Muslims were ready to be led by the leaders who openly disregarded the canons of their respective faiths and rituals, they were not prepared to relax the non-essentials of their respective faiths and customs for the cause of peace and amicability.<sup>126</sup> As he remarked : ". . . A united India will mean freedom for both Hindus and Mussalmans but they refer the strict observance of the most futile and non-essential elements of their respective faiths to freedom. . . ." <sup>127</sup> And he further observed:

The idea that we can remain 'good Hindus' and 'good Mussalmans' in the narrowest sense of these terms and yet win Swaraj, is in my judgment an absurd one. . . . I still believe that we do not need to depart in any manner or degree from the true and essential spirit of Islam and Hinduism in order to be free and united.<sup>128</sup>

Lajpat Rai held that the Muslims in India were not to be treated as foreigners. They formed part and parcel of Indian society as the great bulk of them had originated from the Hindu converts.<sup>129</sup>

The Hindu-Muslim riots also received Lajpat Rai's attention. He believed that at times the major responsibility for the riots lay with the Government. But in many cases, the Muslim organisations and their leaders were to blame. Sometimes, the Hindus, too were responsible but on the whole the communal riots were started by the Muslims under the spell of religious fanaticism.<sup>130</sup> In this connection, Lajpat Rai pertinently observed:

The fact that whenever there have been riots between Hindus and Mussalmans, the latter have looted the former, desecrated their temples and assaulted their women, betrays the widespread diffusion of the idea that the Hindus are 'Kafirs' that the Muslims are in a state of war with them, and that in fighting them, their property and women are 'halal' for the Muslims.<sup>131</sup>

He was also convinced that such crimes were not committed by the ruffians alone. They were inspired by calculating brains and influential leaders. Only the actual outrages were committed by goondas, fanatics and poor people. He was also of the opinion that the communal riots could not be attributed to the economic causes exclusively. If the causes were economic, Lajpat Rai asked; why then did the Muslims not loot their wealthy co-religionists?<sup>132</sup>

In his opinion, pan-Islamism had become a great hindrance to the path of Hindu-Muslim unity and India's march to nationhood. "I have not doubt, in my own mind", said Lajpat Rai, "that Sir Syed's policy of concentration at home was better than pan-Islamism. The advocates of pan-Islamism have never realised that nationalism must precede internationalism whether political or religious".<sup>133</sup>

In his view, "Indian Muslims are more Pan-Islamic and exclusive than the Muslims of any other country on the face of the globe, and that fact alone makes the creation of a United India more difficult than would otherwise be the case".<sup>134</sup>

Lajpat Rai felt that the Hindus, too, were equally susceptible to the excess of communalism. But, in his opinion, they could not be accused of Pan-Hinduism in the sense in which the term was used for Islam, as "Hinduism and Indianism are, in their case, synonymous terms".<sup>135</sup> They too, had their cult of aggressiveness. The militancy of Islam and Christianity was imparted to Hinduism by the Arya Samaj, Swami Vivekanand and Sister Nivedita.<sup>136</sup> In his revised opinion, it was also partly a reaction to un-Hinduism of the Brahmo Samaj.<sup>137</sup>

### Indian National Congress

And Lajpat Rai strongly contended that the Indian National Congress was not a Hindu organisation as alleged by its detractors. The early Hindu leaders of the Congress were not strictly Hindus. "What did Mr. S.N. Banergea or Lal Mohan Ghosh or Anand Mohan Bose", he observed, "care for Hinduism? Even Mahadev Govind Ranade was but an indifferent Hindu. . . . Thus the political nationalist movement of

India was brought into existence by highminded Parsees, enlightened and highminded sons of Hindus. . . and a few enlightened and highminded Muslims. . . a movement of pure freedom. Pure freedom makes no distinction of race or religion.”<sup>138</sup> Since this was not liked by its God-father Dufferin, he raised the “religious and denominational bogey” to strangle it. Lajpat Rai added: “The latter proved to be a Himalayan glacier. . . . That Himalayan glacier was the late Sir Syed’s opposition to the Congress on denominational grounds. I do not mean to say that Sir Syed’s fears about his community were absolutely baseless, but the cry which he raised was practically the death knell of Indian nationalism at the time. . . .”<sup>139</sup>

Lajpat Rai reiterated that while the Indian National Congress was a nationalist movement, the Muslim movement was purely, denominational and sectarian in character. The Muslims’ fear of Hindu majority domination had turned them into a dead-weight against Indian Nationalism.<sup>140</sup> Accounting for Sir Syed’s predilection for the British, he said:

“I am inclined to think that he (Sir Syed) did not believe in the possibility of another Mussalman domination in India either with or without the help of foreign Muslim states and he, therefore, favoured the idea of perpetual British rule in the country.”<sup>141</sup>

He further stated that “The founders of the Indian National Congress were absolutely honest and sincere nationalists. They did not entertain any anti-Muslim intentions, but they knew that nationalism could take no notice of denominationalism.”<sup>142</sup>

### Communal Representation

Lajpat Rai condemned communal representation. According to him, its introduction in India was contrary to all established world practices. In Europe the supremacy of the State over religion helped the process of evolution of the nation-state. But in India an opposite course was adopted. “The acceptance of the principle of communal representation”, he said, “was a concession to religion and is the negation of nationalism . . . . No one can be a true Nationalist who is not an Indian from first to last . . . .”<sup>143</sup>



By 1924 he was critical of the Lucknow Pact of 1916. He had come to believe that the Pact was responsible for increasing the demands of the Muslims for further extension of communal representation to local bodies, government services, and educational institutions. This was viewed by him as a product of an interplay of religion with politics. He said that "People outside the Punjab have no idea to what extent the principle of communal representation has been or is being pushed in the Punjab. Practically all social relations between Hindus and Mohammedans, and Sikhs and non-Sikhs have ceased. . . ." <sup>144</sup> The communal representation and the provisions for separate electorates also went against the national demand. He therefore said that "If our Muslim countrymen are really earnest in their belief in nationalism and in their demand for Swaraj, the least they can do is not to insist on separate electorates." <sup>145</sup>

### Shuddhi and Sangathan

Regarding *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan*, Lajpat Rai came to realize that the *Shuddhi* movement was a product of Muslim sectarianism. The aggressive Hinduism of the Arya Samaj was not political in itself; it was, as he asserted, rather motivated by political considerations. Lajpat Rai held that:

It was the communal demands of the Muslim community . . . which created the atmosphere . . . one can see no way of stopping the movement as long as non-Hindu agencies are free to carry on their proselytizing work . . . the only way to minimise its importance is to do away with communal representation. <sup>146</sup>

As for *Sangathan*, he considered it as "a reaction of the Hindu-Muslim situation". The Khilafat movement similarly gave birth to the *Tanzim*. Lajpat Rai emphasised that both the *Sangathan* and the *Tanzim* would have been welcome, had they united each sect in itself and then paved the way for these two main organisations to come together. But the development took quite different lines. <sup>147</sup> They could possibly serve only "to increase the already existing estrangement between the two

communities. The Muslim movement is also intended to keep the Pan-Islamic movement going.”<sup>148</sup>

### Proportional Representation

The demand for proportional representation for Muslims was likewise rejected by Lajpat Rai. He strongly resented M. A. Jinnah's statement before the Bombay Provincial Muslim League in October 1924, wherein Jinnah had pleaded for proportional representation for Muslims in the representative institutions along with separate electorates and reservation in the public services. He considered Jinnah's demands to be “a negation of the United nationhood. It provides for complete division of India, as it is, into two sections : a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India. . . .”<sup>149</sup> This was a scheme for dividing India and subverting nationalism. As Lajpat Rai wrote:

“Let those who demand communal representation, with separate electorates in all the representative institutions of the land, honestly confess that they do not believe in nationalism or in a United India. The two things are absolutely irreconcilable.”<sup>150</sup>

He said that Jinnah's plea for proportional representation in the legislatures could be considered reasonable if it was applicable to all other communities throughout India. But the plea for “effective” minority representation was untenable. Lajpat Rai considered it particularly in the light of Punjab, where the Hindus and the Sikhs were in a minority and where, if Jinnah's plea was accepted, the Hindus would not be entitled for special representation, though they constituted an effective minority. The representation of the Sikh minority also would not be ensured. On account of the Sikhs, the Muslims could not achieve their decisive majority.<sup>151</sup> He, therefore, suggested the partition of the Punjab:

Under the circumstances I would suggest that a remedy should be sought by which the Muslims might get a decisive majority without trampling on the sensitiveness of the Hindus and the Sikhs. My suggestion is that the Punjab should be partitioned into two provinces, the Western Punjab with a large Muslim majority, to be a Muslim

governed Province; and the Eastern Punjab with a large Hindu-Sikhs majority, to be a non-Muslim governed Province. . . .<sup>152</sup>

He had a similar suggestion for Bengal too, if the Bengalis did not accept the C. R. Das Pact.<sup>153</sup> He observed, in this connection:

Maulana Hasrat Mohani has recently said that the Muslims will never agree to India's having Dominion Status under the British. What they aim at are separate Muslim States in India united with Hindu States under a National Federal Government. He is also in favour of smaller states containing compact Hindu and Muslim population. If communal representation with separate electorates is to be the rule, then Maulana Hasrat's scheme as to smaller provinces seems to be the only workable proposition. Under my scheme the Muslims will have four Muslim States :

- (1) The Pathan Province or the North-West Frontier,
- (2) Western Punjab,
- (3) Sindh, and
- (4) Eastern Bengal

If there are compact Muslim communities in any other part of India, sufficiently large to form a Province, they should be similarly constituted. But it should be distinctly understood that this is not a United India. It means a clear partition of India into a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India.<sup>154</sup>

The concluding remarks here are most noteworthy. For they show that though Lajpat Rai had suggested a plan for partition, it did not amount to his advocacy or approval of it under all conditions.<sup>155</sup>

Even after having suggested such a scheme of division, Lajpat Rai sincerely desired to see the Hindus and the Muslims live together cordially. As for the protagonists of the *Hindu Rashtra*, Lajpat Rai appealed to the Hindus to work under the guidance of commonsense, justice, fairplay and patriotism. He reminded even Gandhi: "Listen to the voice of experience

and caution. . . . Do not try to change human nature simply by resolutions and exhortation.”<sup>156</sup>

But the Kohat wounds, as already mentioned, intransigence of the Muslims, and the attitude of the Congress leaders towards Hindu-Muslim question all compelled Lajpat Rai to give serious thought to the problem of unity among the Hindus. He wanted the Hindu leaders to come together and take a united stand on the question of proportional representation just as Muslim leaders of all shades had done. In a letter that he wrote to them he said that “the Lucknow Pact was more or less a patched up affair between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. The former represented the Muslim community as such, while the latter did not represent the Hindus in the same way. That procedure cannot be followed now. The Hindus as such must come to a decision as to what their attitude should be on these questions.”<sup>157</sup> He appealed to the Hindu leaders to reconsider the matter before the Belgaum Special Session of the Hindu Mahasabha.<sup>158</sup>

Lajpat Rai's support to the Hindu Mahasabha was an event in itself.<sup>159</sup> The Hindu Mahasabha held its session at Belgaum on December 28, 1924.<sup>160</sup> The conference discussed the issues of the Kohat tragedy, removal of untouchability and the policy of the Congress *vis-a-vis* demands of the Muslims for separate electorates.<sup>161</sup> A committee was appointed, “giving a distinct political orientation to the activities of the Mahasabha for the first time”, under the chairmanship of Lajpat Rai, “to ascertain and formulate Hindu opinion on the subject of Hindu-Muslim problem in their relation to the question of further constitutional reforms.”<sup>162</sup> Lajpat Rai in his speech reiterated the past greatness of Hindu civilization, and the present degradation of the Hindus. He emphasised that “Hindus, with a feeling of chivalry and justice, were prepared to be quite fair to all communities.”<sup>163</sup>

His view on Gandhi's pronouncement on Kohat riots received felicitations from the eminent liberal, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri. In a letter to Lajpat Rai on January 10, 1925, Sastri wrote; “. . . Apart from the inappropriateness of Gandhi's remark that the Kohat Hindus should, rather than retire like cowards, have died fighting in their homes, it also appeared to me when

I read it as a serious detraction from the sovereignty of his doctrine of non-violence. . . ."<sup>164</sup>

Lajpat Rai presided over an informal meeting of the Hindu Mahasabha on January 20, 1925 at Pandit Malaviya's residence in Delhi. The first All Parties Conference Committee presided over by Gandhi met three days latter. Those who attended the Conference were Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru, M.A. Jinnah, Ali Brothers, Mrs. Annie Besant, Shraddhanand, Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, H.N. Kunzru, C.Y. Chintamani, Maulana A.K. Azad, Ramaswami Mudaliar and M.R. Jayakar.<sup>165</sup> Jinnah attended only for a few minutes, and made the following statement :

As a party to the Lucknow Pact, I can say that it was never intended to be permanent. The Congress had appointed a committee with Lajpat Rai, Ansari and Mangal Singh to revise the Lucknow Pact, but while this committee was working on the proposal, Das struck a pact in Bengal. It was turned down at Cocanada. Though there are a few nationalists both among the Hindu and Muslims who will like to do away with the separate electorates, the facts must be faced. The large bulk of the communities have no confidence in each other. The Punjab and Bengal Muslims insist that they should be restored to their majority. The Lucknow pact was calculated to protect minorities by two methods: Weightage and a provision that no resolution concerning a community should be proceeded with if objected to by three-fourths of the members of that community. Unfortunately, this provision has remained a dead letter. I suggest that Bengal and Punjab Muslims should be restored to the majority and in other provinces the two principles of safeguarding minorities shoul be accepted as in the Lucknow Pact. The question of representation in the Services can be taken up separately.<sup>166</sup>

Jayakar narrates : "Jinnah, on behalf of the Muslim, took a very prominent part and presented the Muslim's view with disingenuous cleverness. He claimed for the Muslims special electorates in Councils, Local Bodies and even the University. . . . Lajpat Rai, Malaviya and Shraddhanand

urged Muslims to lay their cards on the table and explain what they wanted, so that they might consult the Hindu community and arrive at conclusion. . . .<sup>167</sup>

Jayakar continued : "After the Sub-Committee had adjourned *sine die*, an informal gathering of the representatives of different interests met at the Delhi residence of Hakim Ajmal Khan but it was soon discovered that the real points at issue would be best tackled by Malaviya and Lajpat Rai on the one hand and Jinnah on the other, probably with Gandhi more as hyphen than a vinculum."<sup>168</sup>

There was one more informal talk at Delhi between Lajpat Rai, Gandhi, Jinnah, Ali Brothers, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Maulana Azad, Motilal Nehru, Narendranath and Jayaramdas.<sup>169</sup> Here again "Jinnah stated his Muslim demand—separate electorates, increased proportion in the Punjab and Bengal in excess of the population basis and in other provinces the percentage to continue. Lajpat Rai's position remained the same as before—joint electorates and population as the basis everywhere."<sup>170</sup> Commenting on these talks later, Jinnah said, "Give me three leaders to join me over a united programme which was all but accepted at Delhi and Swaraj will not be a mere dream but a matter brought within the realm of real politics." And these three people were Pandit Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai.<sup>171</sup> Clearly Jinnah knew what weight Lajpat Rai's opinions carried in the Congress circle.

As the deputy leader of the Swarajist Party in the Central Assembly he held that in view of the Muslims' pro-government attitude, it was injurious to Hindu interests to follow the methods of obstruction and walk-outs.

... My mind is quite open on the Hindu-Muslim question. Any solution effective for national purposes and safeguarding against the danger of dividing the provinces on the basis of Hindu and Mohammedan majorities will appeal to me. But from a close study of the mentality of the Muslim leaders, I am afraid, they are determined to have their own way. In that case, I will rather let them negotiate with the Government than agree to propositions

which to me seem fatal to the very purpose for which an understanding is desired.<sup>172</sup>

This was Lajpat Rai's approach to the Hindu-Muslim conflict in 1924-25.

From April, 1925 onwards Lajpat Rai devoted himself wholeheartedly to the cause of the Hindu Sangathan movement. But this time Lajpat Rai had come to realize the paramount necessity for the Hindus to unify themselves. In his Presidential Address (at the Calcutta session of the Hindu Mahasabha, 1925), he

warmly supported the nationalist policy so far followed by the Hindus. He said that they were striving for a national government founded on justice to all communities, all classes and all interests. He also insisted that the Hindus must on no account give up the Congress and said, 'the Hindu Sabhas should make no encroachment on the province of the Congress, except so far as purely communal questions are concerned.'<sup>173</sup>

After the session he went to Assam to organise the Sangathan. He also went to Burma to preside over the first Burma Provincial Hindu Conference. Later he visited Sindh and organised the Sindh Provincial Hindu Sabha along with Dr. Choithram and Jairamdas. In the Pnnjab, Lajpat Rai along with Bhai Parmanand and Dr. Gokal Chand Narang organised the Punjab Hindu Sabha.<sup>174</sup>

The Bombay branch of the Hindu Mahasabha, concerned with the serious Hindu-Muslim differences and forcible conversions and abductions of Hindu women, proposed to have in December 1925 a Provincial Conference for the first time in Bombay. Lajpat Rai's name, "whose reputation for a nonparty union of the Hindus had spread in Bombay", was proposed for the Presidentship.<sup>175</sup> "Lajpat Rai", wrote M. R. Jayakar, "grew almost enthusiastic on finding that the Hindu effort in Bombay promised to work on the basis of Communal amity, freedom and tolerance."<sup>176</sup> Lajpat Rai presided over the Bombay Hindu Conference. The occasion was marked by the beginning of an institution founded for the uplift of fallen Hindu

women, named after Swami Shraddhanand.<sup>177</sup> In his Presidential Address Lajpat Rai said;

the Sabha aims at creating a spirit of unity between the different sections of the Hindu society, *without any ulterior design against any other community or class of persons outside that society. Ours is a unifying and integrating function and in no way a disuniting and disintegrating one.* . . .<sup>178</sup>

He justified the Hindu Sangathan movement, saying, "... Insistence on communal distinctions by one community followed by Government recognition of its separate political existence as a necessary element of political life, reacts on peoples of other faiths and leaves them no alternative but to organise themselves communally, if they do not desire to be eventually merged in the former."<sup>179</sup>

Lajpat Rai further observed:

Communal organization has thus been thrust upon us. At the same time it is our bounden duty to be perpetually vigilant so as to avoid its generation into a communal war. . . .As a Hindu I consider it my duty to take all measures that will effectively prevent a Hindu's conversion to any other religion, be it Islam or Christianity; subject to that qualification, I see no reason why there should not be the freest social intercourse between the different religious communities. . . .<sup>180</sup>

During elections for the Central assembly in 1926, the role of the Hindu Mahasabha became a controversial issue. While Bhai Parmanand wanted the Hindu Mahasabha to contest elections in its own name and capture seats in the Legislatures, Lajpat Rai did not like it. Instead, Lajpat Rai suggested, by way of compromise, that only those Congressmen considered *persona non grata* for the Hindu cause should be opposed in the elections. Bhai Parmanand as well as Pandit Malaviya resented this. But ultimately the opinion of Lajpat Rai prevailed and the Hindu Mahasabha did not put its own candidates in the elections.<sup>181</sup> In retrospect, Lajpat Rai's stand must be regarded as a measure of statesmanship and of his freedom from a narrow communal outlook.<sup>182</sup>



Lajpat Rai had good reasons for his policy :

... I *do not* want the Hindus to return such people to the councils as are advocates of the idea of Hindu Raj or are in favour of a counter-alliance with the Government. What I desire the Hindu electorate to do is to send genuine nationalists, stern patriots and firm Hindus who will not compromise in such a way or yield to such an extent as to endanger the position of the Hindu community.<sup>183</sup>

When he founded the Nationalist Party in 1926 and contested the elections for the legislature in opposition to the Swarajists, he gave expression to his nationalistic creed. In an election meeting he said he stood "for the policy of strong and real nationalism consistent with the just claims of every community" and refused "to barter the honour of the country and the community for a mess of pottage either by favours from the Government or for favours from other sister communities."<sup>184</sup> Incidentally, his Nationalist Party was more successful than the Hindu Mahasabha in 1926 elections.<sup>185</sup>

While the talks on Hindu-Muslims unity were going on in 1926-27, the communal situations in India was worsening. In the words of Pattabhi Sitaramayya, "in 1927, Hindu-Muslim unity was in the air while Hindu-Muslim riots were on the *terra-firma*. Serious Hindu-Muslim riots took place in Lahore on May 3 and 7, 1927."<sup>186</sup> But Lajpat Rai gave an example of his liberalism and humanitarianism in matters of religion, when on the "Rangila Rasul" episode he strongly disapproved of all insults to religion, on the floor of the Central Legislative Assembly on September 5, 1927.<sup>187</sup>

### Simon Commission

When the Simon Commission was appointed, Lajpat Rai thought that the boycott of the Commission would neither adversely affect the Hindu interests nor those of the Muslims.<sup>188</sup> When some leaders of Punjab wanted to appear before the Commission for exposing the pro-Muslim attitude of the white bureaucracy, Lajpat Rai said that there was no sense in doing so. He said : "The Muslim Policy in the Punjab has been

and is the policy of the Government. . . . It is the Chief Secretary and his supporters that rule.”<sup>189</sup> Lajpat Rai suggested joint action of all the communities especially the Hindus and the Muslims, for the boycott of the Commission. He strongly favoured the policy of the Indian National Congress in this regard. This nationalist attitude of Lajpat Rai (and Pandit Malaviya) displeased the hard core of the Hindu Mahasabha.<sup>190</sup> Ultimately under their influence, the Hindu Mahasabha Working Committee passed a resolution for the boycott of the Simon Commission.<sup>191</sup>

While moving his boycott resolution in the Central Assembly he appealed to the Hindus and the Muslims alike to have no truck with the Commission.<sup>192</sup> He wanted the Muslims, particularly,

to ‘Remember the Partition of Bengal. Remember the Treaty of Severs.’ No amount of promises by the Government will ever help you. Islam does not teach you to be slaves and to cringe. I would say to them : “Play the game; be men and join in the struggle. . . .”<sup>193</sup>

To Dr. Abdullah Suhrawardy’s charge that Muslims interests were safer in the hands of the British,<sup>194</sup> he replied :

. . .If he has no faith in Hindus and he thinks he will be better treated by Englishmen, he is entirely mistaken. The English will not live in this country for ever. It is we and they who are going to live for ever here. He has no faith in Hindus today, but he will have to cultivate that faith sometime or other. . . .<sup>195</sup>

### Nehru Report

In his Presidential Address in the Provincial Hindu Conference at Etawah on October 27-28, 1928, Lajpat Rai accepted the recommendations of the Nehru Report and believed that giving minorities sufficient guarantees and safeguards would pave the way for the establishment of a secular democratic state.<sup>196</sup> While Lajpat Rai admired the nationalist Muslims for accepting the recommendations of the Nehru Report, he did not spare the extremists of the Muslim League for demanding

enhanced communal representation. When Bhai Parmanand said that the reservations allowed to minorities in some provinces might be extended to the Hindu minority in Punjab,<sup>179</sup> Lajpat Rai observed:

...although the position, under which reservation of seats for all minorities, Hindus or Muslims, outside the Punjab and Bengal has been allowed, is open to objection on principle, it is not so when it is considered that it is only for ten years and that also, as a compromise. After ten years all vestiges of communal representation must disappear from the Constitution of India.<sup>198</sup>

Lajpat Rai felt that the demands of the protagonists of the Muslim minority in India were unparalleled in world history. The minority had an ambition to control and devitalise the majority so as to cripple it for the purposes of running the Government.<sup>199</sup>

Muslim advocates of a centrifugal form of Federal Government openly and frankly want a *carte blanche*, and free and unfettered authority to do what they like in five out of eleven provinces in which they desire India to be divided with no power in the Central Government to check the vagaries of Hindu or Muslim majority provinces.<sup>200</sup>

He did not believe in the idea of permanent majorities or minorities.

... In no case will the Hindus agree to a scheme which would weaken the central authority and divide the provinces into permanent religious majorities and minorities. The Constitution of the Central authority must be free of communal consideration except for the period of the ten years for which special reservation is allowed to the Mussalmans in the scheme. . . .<sup>201</sup>

Lajpat Rai now strongly disapproved the term *Hindu Nationalism* and asked every Hindu to shake off sub-nationalism and have faith only in Indian Nationalism. He categorically declared

. . .I do not want the Hindus to call themselves a *quam*, much less can the use of the term be justified for caste and sub-castes. But such is the fissiparous tendency of the times that even sub-castes clamour for a separate realisation of their political rights as separate *quams*. . . .<sup>203</sup>

### Conclusion

Clearly then, nationalism played a predominant part in shaping Lajpat Rai's religious outlook. His association with the Arya Samaj, his belief in the infallibility of the Vedas, his early belief in the Hindu revivalism, his attitude to Christianity and Islam, were all a testimony to this. His religion was not of "the market place or of the society or theocratic variety. His religion is of a nation-building and nation uplifting variety."<sup>203</sup> If he was critical of Christianity and Islam, it was because he saw in them seeds of extra-territorial loyalties. He considered Christianity an imported religion. But he *never* practised, preached, or encouraged intolerance to other religions. Even his zeal for revitalising the Hindu society and his attachment to the Arya Samaj could not change his inherently tolerant outlook.

Throughout his public career, Lajpat Rai insisted upon Hindu-Muslim unity. But the Muslim revivalism, aided by its own separatism<sup>204</sup> and the encouragement of the British bureaucracy, kept the majority of Muslims away from the Indian National Congress as well as the rest of the Indian communities.

On the question of desecration of tempies, insult to Hindu women and massacre of the innocent Hindus at the hands of the Muslims, Lajpat Rai joined hands with the Hindu Mahasabha. But even there, he never lost sight of national demands. He discouraged all efforts of the Mahasabhites to give the organisation a separate political entity. The work of the Hindu Mahasabha during Lajpat Rai's association with it, *remained mainly social and religious. He never subscribed to the concept of Hindu Rashtra.* But sadly enough, his efforts have rarely been judged in the right perspective.

In this connection the detailed observation made in 1926 by Lajpat Rai himself, when accused by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu of communal tendencies should be of interest.

... I still believe that the Indian National Congress is the only national movement of importance in India, which deserves to be supported by all patriotic Indians and it is for that reason that Pandit Malaviya and myself, stick to it in spite of our substantial differences with the present leaders... the 'blame lies not with us for supporting the Hindu movement, but with those leaders who support and advocate the principle of communal representation... Mrs. Naidu is wrong in saying that we are engaged in promoting sectional interest as against national interest... The Muslim insistence on communal representation is the very negation of nationhood... the only way out of the impasse is to go to back real nationalism which was the original foundation of the Indian National Congress. Men like Tyabji and Rasul recognised this truth and opposed communal representation... I want to appeal to all my friends and the press to avoid dragging my name into a communal controversy.<sup>205</sup>

This statement should put his views on the communal question in its true perspective.

Lajpat Rai has often been condemned as a communalist because he wanted the Muslims to give up their separate electorates and communal representation and refrain from indulging in communal deeds.<sup>206</sup> But if he did that, he similarly exhorted the Hindus to refrain from separatist deeds, and work in close cooperation with other religionists. This should have won him right appreciation from the Hindus as well as the Muslims. But that was not to be.<sup>207</sup>

Thus, Lajpat Rai, who believed in secularism and in the freedom of religion and conscience, and over and above all in Hindu-Muslim harmony, cannot justly be called a communalist. He was a strong nationalist and so opposed all denationalising activities. He was proud of his Hindu origin and believed in the greatness of Hindu religion. But at the same time he respected other religions. He wanted a Hindu to be a true Hindu and a Muslim to be a true Muslim. And genuine religion knew neither hatred nor violence. It seems best to close with the memorial tribute paid to Lajpat Rai by Mahatma Gandhi in *Young India* of November 22, 1928:

With all deference to my Musalman friends, I assert that he was no enemy of Islam. His desire to strengthen and purify Hinduism must not be confounded with hatred of Musalmans or Islam. He was sincerely desirous of promoting and achieving Hindu-Muslim unity. He wanted not Hindu Raj but he passionately wanted Indian Raj; he wanted all who called themselves Indians to have absolute equality.<sup>208</sup>

## Notes

1. See *Atmakatha*, op. cit., pp. 22-5.
2. Ibid., pp. 39-41.
3. Daniel Argov, *Moderates and Extremists in the Indian Nationalist Movement*, op. cit., p. 61.
4. See *Atmakatha*, op. cit., p. 44.
5. See *Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit., pp. 1-38.
6. See Sankar Ghose, *The Western Impact on India Politics*, op. cit., pp. viii-ix.

He writes : "Sir Saiyed Ahmed Khan had no love for English Parliamentary institutions . . . . The introduction of Parliamentary democracy into India, Sir Saiyed apprehended, would result in the establishment of a government "English in name but Hindu in reality".

7. See *Atmakatha*, op. cit., pp. 136-7. Also see *The Bharat Sudhar*, March 10, 1897 where Lajpat Rai "exhorted Hindus to become united in order to repel the attacks of the enemies of the Vedic religion and of Hindu nation."

8. Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, op. cit., p. 251.
9. Ibid., p. 252.
10. *The Zamana*, February, 1911.
11. Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, op. cit., p. 253.
12. cf. *Indian Unrest*, op. cit., pp. 116-17.

Valentine Chirol wrote : " . . . There is still a very strong under-current of anti-British feeling . . . . it is rife wherever the Arya Samaj is known to be most active. One of the most unpleasant features has been the propaganda carried on by them among the Sepoys of the Native Army . . . . One of the most mischievous results of the Aryan propaganda, and one which may well cause the most immediate anxiety, is the growing antagonism which it has bred between Hindus and Mahomedans, . . .

for the Mahomedans are convinced that the Arya Samaj is animated with no less bitter hostility towards Islam than towards British rule."

13. *The Arya Samaj*, op. cit., pp. 155-6, and pp. 165-9.

14. See J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, op. cit., p. 111.

15. See B. R. Purohit, *Hindu Revivalism and Indian Nationalism* (Sathi Prakashan, Sagar, 1965), p. 169. He writes that "a tradition of social reform started by Dayanand came up to Mahatma Gandhi. The social and religious consciousness so generated became an integral part of the wider national movement."

16. See *The Arya Samaj*, op. cit., p. 272.

17. Ibid.

18. Highlighting this aspect, Charles H. Heimsath observes : "It was significant that the first great Hindu revivalist, Dayanand Saraswati, was also a social reformer of major rank. The extremist nationalists who were trained in the Arya Samaj, including Lajpat Rai, made a close connection in their thinking and action between revivalism and the reformation of Hindu society . . ." Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, op. cit., p. 309.

19. *Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit., p. 99.

20. *The Soul of India* (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1960), p. 227.

21. *Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit., p. 99.

22. See Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East*, op. cit., p. 349. He wrote that "a truer basis of unity than modern national sentiment was to be found in a common intellectual heritage, persisting through an unbroken tradition and moulding and permeating India's whole social life to the minutest detail, and the peculiar contemplative piety which lies at the root of all various forms of Hinduism."

23. *Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit., p. 100.

24. Ibid., p. 101-2.

25. Ibid., p. 107.

26. Ibid., p. 100.

27. Ibid., pp. 99-100, 106-7.

28. See *Atmakatha*, op. cit., p. 113.

29. See *Daily Milap* (Lahore), November 17, 1929.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. See *Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit., p. 99.

34. See *Hindu Revivalism And Indian Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 14.

35. *Continuity and Change in Indian Politics*, op. cit., pp. 27-8.

36. *Lala Lajpat Rai : The Man in His Word*, op. cit., p. 58. Originally published in the *Hindustan Review* and the *Kayastha Smachar*, September-October, 1902.

37. Ibid., p. 63.

38. See O. P. Goyal, *Studies in Modern Political Thought*, op. cit., p. 90.

39. Nationalism converted into Hindu Nationalism. op. cit., pp. 168 and 173.
40. *The Soul of India*, op. cit., p. 26.
41. *The Discovery of India* (Meridan Books Limited, London, 1960), p. 343.
42. *Continuity and Change in Indian Politics*, op. cit., p. 100.
43. R. Palme Dutt, *India Today*, op. cit., p. 269.
44. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, p. 114.
45. *The Arya Samaj*, op. cit., p. 282. Lajpat Rai wrote : "British rule in India has opened for us, so to say, the flood-gates of the ocean of thought, of culture and of liberation; it has materially helped in bringing back to us the consciousness of the fact that we were great and mighty in the realms both of thought and action, and that our national self-respect and honour demand that we should put forth our very best efforts to regain that proud position for our beloved country."
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., p. 283.
48. D. C. Gupta, *Indian National Movement* (Vikas Publications, Delhi, 1970), p. 44.
49. See K. P. Karunakaran, *Religion and Political Awakening in India* (Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1966), p. 82. He writes : "While Hindus went back to their religious and Historical past to assert their self-confidence, the Muslims went back to early Islam and the past history of Arabia.
50. Ibid., p. 90. "The political significance," observes Karunakaran, "of the religious revivalism among the Indian Muslims was different from that of the Hindu religious revivalism. As members of a minority community, who looked to the record of Muslims outside India to discover past glory and to get inspiration, the Indian Muslims, under the influence of the revivalist trend, were not taken to promote solidarity among all the Indians as one nation or as one political entity . . . ."
51. *The Panjabee*, October 13, 1906.
52. *The Modern Review*, March, 1907.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. *The Surat Congress and Conferences*, op. cit., p. 124.
57. *The Mahratta*, February 21, 1909.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. See, *India Under Morley and Minto*, op. cit., p. 46. M. N. Das narrates : "Once an Indian Gentleman met John Morley and paid him exaggerated compliments "their Guru, a Great Man, then (by noble crescendo) the greatest Man since Akbar !!!" "I hope", wrote Morley to Minto, "he will balance the little account between us two, by swearing that you are far Greater than Aurangzeb". *Morley Papers* : Morley to Minto, July 20, 1909.



61. Ibid., p. 85. *Morley Papers*; Minto to Morley, October 16, 1907.

62. Ibid., p. 104. M. N. Das observes: "The great evils of the Act of 1909 were realised at the close of Minto's Indian days. The National Congress finally understood that the Hindus and the Moslems had been kept apart politically . . . . Minto succeeded in turning the tables on the Congress itself by bringing in a new force to counteract nationalism . . . ."

63. *The Mahratta*, February 21, 1909.

64. Ibid.

65. *The Panjabee*, July 15, 1909.

66. Ibid.

67. *The Tribune*, October 20, 1915.

68. Ibid.

69. *The Call to Young India*, op. cit., p. 97.

70. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. I.*, p. 287.

71. See *Lajpat Rai : India's Will to Freedom*, op. cit., p. 77.

72. *The Modern Review*, December, 1919.

73. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. I.*, p. 347.

74. *Modern Review*, June, 1919.

75. Ibid., October, 1919.

76. *India's will to Freedom*, op. cit., p. 84.

77. *The Indian Review*, September, 1920.

78. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. I.*, op. cit., p. 41.

79. Ibid., p. 42.

80. The British diplomacy sowed seeds of mutual hatred and disunity within various ethnic groups of India to defeat the attainment of Indian Nationhood. "With English rule", Lajpat Rai observed, "in India, came the Hindu-Muslim problem. Now it is extending . . . . Never before was communal consciousness so keen, so assertive, nay so aggressive as within the last fifty years of the British rule . . . . British rule has created, fostered and nourished it."

*Ideals of Non-Cooperation and Other Essays*, op. cit., pp. 68-9.

81. *The Communal Triangle in India* (Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1942), p. 7.

82. *India Divided* (Hind Kitabs, Bombay, 1946), p. 87.

83. See Durgadass, op. cit., pp. 123-4. He writes: "To Gandhi, the apostle of communal harmony, this Hindu-Muslim-Sikh tension caused the deepest pain . . . . What he found most baffling was that communalism had become inextricably mixed up with politics. For his own part, he had diagnosed the causes of Hindu-Muslim tension and suggested what he deemed to be excellent remedies. But he confessed that neither he nor his Colleagues, Ajmal Khan, Ansari and Azad, had made a worthwhile impact on the Muslims. That, he said to me, was mainly because the British were continuously dangling before the Muslims a carrot in the shape of greater privileges and concessions."

• 84. *Writings and Speeches, Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 92.

85. See Durga Dass, *India From Curzon to Nehru and After*, op. cit., p. 77.

86. *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. II. p. 43.

87. The overdoings of the Khilafatists, through Mullahs and Maulvis and Maulanas, caused considerable apprehension in Lajpat Rai's mind. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's encounter with this mentality of the Khilafatists would show that Lajpat Rai was not wrong in his fears regarding the unsafe position of the Hindus. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan recollected :

"In jail I had an opportunity to exchange views with Lala Lajpat Rai and other Congress and Khilafat workers. With Malik Lal Khan I studied the Holy Koran delightfully, but soon he dropped out, accusing me of giving my own interpretation to the text. He was a blind follower of tradition and had not sufficient knowledge and intelligence to appreciate an independent interpretation." See D. G. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan* (Gandhi Peace Foundation, Delhi, 1967), p. 41.

88. Cited in *The People*, April 13, 1929.

89. Quoted in V. V. Nagarkar, *Genesis of Pakistan* (Allied Publishers P. Ltd., Bombay, 1975), p. 490.

90. *The Tribune*, December 9, 1923.

91. Ibid.

92. See Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India* (Publications Division, India, New Delhi, 1972), Vol. IV, p. 17.

93. *The Tribune*, December, 9, 1923.

94. Ibid., January 31, 1924.

The National Pact was drafted by Lajpat Rai and Dr. M. A. Ansari as being the members of a Sub-Committee appointed at the Congress Session in Delhi in September 1923, for guiding the relations of the two communities. The draft was prepared with the help of Maulana Azad and was referred to the Congress at the Cocanada Session for consideration.

95. Ibid., December 9, 1923.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid.

105. Ibid.

106. *Ideals of Non-Cooperation and other Essays*, op. cit., p. 69.

107. Ibid., pp. 74-5.

108. Ibid., p. 75.

109. *The Tribune*, "The Hindu-Muslim Problem", November 26, 1924.

110. See *The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I.*, op. cit., p. 275.

111. Ibid., p. 276.

112. Ibid., The Central National Panchayat was composed of Gandhi, as Chairman and Convenor, and Hakim Ajmal Khan, Lajpat Rai, G. K. Nariman, Dr. S. K. Datta, Master Sunder Singh of Lyallpur as members.

113. *The Tribune*, November 26, 1924.

114. Ibid.

115. Ibid., November 28, 1924.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid., November 30, 1924.

119. Ibid.

120. Ibid.

121. Ibid.

122. Ibid.

123. Ibid.

124. Ibid., December 3, 1924.

125. Ibid.

126. Ibid.

127. Ibid.

128. Ibid.

129. Ibid., December 5, 1924.

130. Ibid.

131. Ibid.

132. Ibid.

133. Ibid., December 10, 1924.

134. Ibid., December 11, 1924.

135. Ibid.

136. Ibid.

137. Ibid., December 12, 1924.

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid.

140. Ibid.

141. Ibid.

142. Ibid.

143. Ibid.

144. Ibid., December 13, 1924.

145. Ibid., December 14, 1924.

146. Ibid., December 13, 1924.

147. Ibid.

148. Ibid.

149. Ibid., December 14, 1924.

150. Ibid.

151. Ibid.

152. Ibid.

153. Ibid.

154. Ibid. The italics are of the author's. Also see *Modern Review*, April, 1925. Commenting upon Lajpat Rai's plan for the partition of India, Chodhury Khaliquzzaman wrote : "Lala Lajpat Rai, although a Hindu leader, had prepared a scheme in 1924 in which he had provided for four Muslim States, N.W.F.P., Punjab, Sind and East Bengal, forgetting the existence of Baluchistan. Thereafter in November-December, 1930 during the first Round Table Conference Choudhri Rahmat Ali met many Muslim leaders in London and explained to them his scheme of partition for the first time giving it the name of Pakistan . . ." See *Pathway to Pakistan* (Longmans, Lahore, 1961), p. 228.

155. See Feroz Chand, "In Lajpat Rai India lost her Lincoln," *Golden Jubilee Souvenir : Servants of the People Society*, December 1972, op. cit.

156. *The Tribune*, December 17, 1924.

157. See M. R. Jayakar, *Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 484.

158. Ibid.

159. Ibid., p. 497. M. R. Jayakar wrote : "Lajpat Rai held with regard to the Hindus, a very coveted position as a leader. His past services to the country, his wide travels in foreign countries, his own position as a reformer in the Punjab gave him a unique position in the country, especially with regard to the Hindu-Muslim question which in the peculiar atmosphere of the Punjab, had assumed great importance. "See also Indra Prakash, op. cit., p. 160. He writes : "Lalaji ever great in his patriotism and equally sincere in his feelings for the Hindu nation, was another great convert to the cause of the Hindu Renaissance."

160. See Indra Prakash, Ibid., p. 23. He narrates : "So spontaneous and widespread was the Hindu awakening in the country, that when another special session of the Hindu Mahasabha was held in Belgaum . . . under the presidentship of Pandit Malaviya, Congress leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Lala Lajpat Rai, C. R. Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru and even the Ali brothers, attended the session."

161. Ibid.

162. See M. R. Jayakar, op. cit., p. 517. Other prominent members of the committee were C. Y. Chintamani, Babu Rajendra Prasad, T. Prakasam, C. R. Reddy, Jairamdas Doulatram, M. R. Jayakar, etc.

163. Ibid., 518.

164. T. N. Jagadisan (Ed.) *Letters of Rt. Hon'ble V. S. Srinivasa Sastri* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963), pp. 154-5.

165. See M. L. Jayakar, op. cit., p. 535.

166. See V. V. Nagarkar, *Genesis of Pakistan*, op. cit., pp. 172-3.

167. M. R. Jayakar, op. cit., p. 535.

168. Ibid.

169. Ibid., p. 539.

170. Ibid.

171. M. H. Saiyid, *Mohammed Ali Jinnah : A Political Study* (Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1945), p. 400.

172. *The Hindustan Review*, Jan-June, 1925.
173. Asoka Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan, *The Communal Triangle in India*, op. cit., p. 187.
174. See Indra Prakash, op. cit., pp. 25-6.
175. See M. R. Jayakar, *Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 632.
176. Ibid., p. 635.
177. Ibid., pp. 713 and 720.
178. See *The People*, December 6, 1925 for the Supplement containing the full text of Lala Lajpat Rai's Presidential Address delivered at the Bombay Hindu Conference, December 5, 1925. Italics of the author.
179. Ibid.
180. Ibid. Also see *The People*, December 13, 1925 for Lajpat Rai's comments on the Bombay Hindu Conference. Here Lajpat Rai curiously enough mentions that Mrs. Sarojini Naidu was not only present in the three days proceedings of the Bombay Hindu Conference but she also took part in deliberations.
181. See Indra Prakash, op. cit., p. 27-8.
182. Indra Prakash retorted : "Had the resolution of Bhai Parmanand been accepted, the fate of the country would have been different from what it is today, because in the 1926 elections, the majority of the Hindu legislators would be owing allegiance to the Hindu Mahasabha, and no mischief could have been caused to Hindustan." (p. 29).
183. See *The Tribune*, September 30, 1926. Italics of the author.
184. Ibid.
185. But Indra Prakash comments : "Herein lies the truth of the unfortunate line of action that the Hindu Mahasabha took under the pressure of Lala Lajpat Rai in not contesting the elections entirely on its own ticket." (op. cit., p. 31).
186. *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 313.
187. See *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. IV, 1972, p. 3930. Also see *The People*, May 29, 1927.
188. *The Tribune*, December 16, 1927.
189. Ibid.
190. See Indra Prakash, op. cit., p. 34.
191. Only Bhai Parmanand and Dr., Moonje supported the Commission. Ibid., p. 36.
192. See *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. I, 1928, p. 385.
193. Ibid., p. 391.
194. Ibid.
195. Ibid., p. 499.
196. See *The People*, November 1, 1928. Also see Prabha Dixit, *Communalism—A Struggle for Power* (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1974), p. 161. She writes, "The Punjab Hindu Sabha leaders had adopted a defiant attitude even in the case of Nehru Report. Except Lajpat Rai no one had come from Punjab to attend the Conference called by Dr. B. S. Moonje to discuss the proposals of Nehru Report."

197. Ibid.

198. Ibid.

199. Ibid.

200. Ibid.

201. Ibid.

202. Ibid.

203. See the Editor's Note in *Lajpat Rai : The Call to Young India*, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

204. Dealing with the antiquity of Muslim separatism, Rafiq Zakaria also writes : ". . . In fact these twenty-one years (1885-1906) have turned out to be the most crucial period in modern India for it can safely be asserted now that the father of Muslim "Nationhood", was not Mr. Jinnah but Sir Syed : that all the arguments that Mr. Jinnah later advanced for partitioning the sub-continent were not only the same which Sir Syed used while opposing the Congress, but were apparently copied from the latter's utterances because even the words used by Mr. Jinnah are, at places, the same as in Sir Syed's speeches and writings." *Rise of Muslims in Indian Politics*, (Somaiya Publications, Bombay, 1970), See Preface, p. xii (Italics supplied).

205. Lajpat Rai quoted in M. R. Jayakar, *Vol. II*, op. cit., pp. 715-16.

206. V. V. Nagarkar narrates, "At the All India Khilafat Conference held at Delhi in May, 1926, President Maulana Syed Suleman Nadvi (leader of the Khilafat delegation to the Hedjat Muslim Conference) observed that the Muslims did not mind Sangathan but were strongly concerned about Shuddhi. Abdul Rehman Dojanawe observed that if the Muslims in India came out in the field with an effective force, the Lalas (men such as Lala Lajpat Rai) also Hindu banias (trading community of the Punjab) would come forward with folded hands and make peace in two days. Muhammed Ali supported the tabligh movement and observed that it was the duty of every Muslim to convert non-Muslims to Islam. He prayed for the day when he would convert Gandhi to Islam." *Genesis of Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 160.

207. V. P. Varma writes : "Lalaji wanted justice. He would not yield to the whims and dictates of an aggressive bureaucracy. He also stood for justice in the sense of giving to each individual and group what is due to it. He believed in the cooperation and rapprochement between Hindus and Muslims . . . . But he never became a communalist and never subscribed to any kind of work that would injure the cause of Swaraj." *Modern Indian Political Thought*, op. cit., p. 386. In a slightly different tone O. P. Goel observes, "It must be asserted that the growth of nationalism can take place on purely economic and political foundations. It can also be asserted that political nationalism can evolve out of personal nationalism. What Lala Lajpat Rai did was that he was preaching both of them. He was doing this in the hope that the conversion from personal to political nationalism would speed up once India is free and has a government of its own. In that case the economic and political factors would pre-dominate the socio-religious factors and the conversion

process would be accelerated. We can ask ourselves if that is not what is really happening in a free and independent India?" "Lala Lajpat Rai and two Concepts of Nationalism—Hindu Communalism and Multi-communal Indian Nationalism", Seminar Papers on *Lajpat Rai and Relevance of His Ideas Today*, Punjab University, Chandigarh, November 17-19, 1972 (mimeographed).

208. *Pen-Portraits and Tributes by Gandhiji*, op. cit., p. 146. Also see S. B. Kher (Ed.), *Homage to the Departed by M. K. Gandhi*, op. cit., p. 67.

## CHAPTER XI

### Conclusion

The foregoing study of Lala Lajpat Rai's role in the Indian National Movement constitutes the basic framework for reviewing his life and ideas. This primarily includes an assessment of Lajpat Rai's multiple roles as a great leader in the Indian National Congress. But this assessment is not to be confined to the historical events of Lajpat Rai's career alone. It has to be extended to a complete analysis of his ideas on the fundamental problems of Indian polity. These ideas, it may be noted, are inseparable from his activities as a national leader. In fact, they are derived from and are dependent upon his political activism. It is now axiomatic to say that Lajpat Rai like most of his contemporaries was essentially a man of action. He was, and he remained, a leader of the people, whose lot was cast in the mainstream of the political struggle for national independence.

In retrospect, Lajpat Rai's great contribution to the development of the Indian National Congress must be regarded as consisting in his advocacy and practice of Extremism. That the Extremists, particularly under Lajpat Rai's influence, differed from the Moderates in their techniques and objectives, was natural enough. What was more significant was that Lajpat Rai did not permit the militancy of the Extremists to be solely divisive. He justified the Extremist methods on practical as well as ideological grounds and in doing so repudiated the methods of the Moderates. But he did not believe in Extremism for its own sake.

If a total assessment of Lajpat Rai as an Extremist is made now perhaps his Extremism could be seen to have been as helpful as the constitutionalism of the Moderates in promoting the cause of Indian Nationalism. Lajpat Rai proved to be



a rational Extremist and not a doctrinaire one. His Extremism and its political character had an empirical and a practical basis and was neither absolute nor mythical in spirit.

This became abundantly clear in the subsequent career of Lajpat Rai after the Extremist phase. His Extremism was mellowed with greater realism as he suffered the ordeal of deportation and the compulsions of extended sojourns abroad. When he returned to India he was already face to face with the beginnings of the Gandhian era with its technique of non-violent direct action. His reconciliation with the Gandhian technique was more difficult but not less meaningful.

Lajpat Rai's plunge into the Swaraj Party and his emergence as an astute constitutionalist were even more remarkable because that would demonstrate the transformation of his Extremism. This change in Lajpat Rai was as total as it was timely. At first glance, this might reveal an apparent inconsistency in his politics but on a deeper probing the transformation would appear to be a part of historical change. It was Lajpat Rai's dynamism that correlated the two phases. Above all it was his nationalism that provided the ultimate link between Extremism and Constitutionalism.

His differences with Mahatma Gandhi would be more convincing if we took into account the fundamental difference between the two leaders. While Gandhi was an idealist reformer, Lajpat Rai remained throughout his life a practical man. He admired and adored Gandhi's non-violence but he remained a great sceptic about its practicability in politics. It is interesting to recall that Lajpat Rai was one of the earliest advocates of the technique of passive resistance. However, later on he became only a partial votary of the technique under Gandhi's leadership. Pattabhi Sitaramayya's remark that Lajpat Rai was a fighter and not a Satyagrahi<sup>1</sup> was nearer the truth, but this was quite evitable in the very nature of things.

Lajpat Rai's commitment to nationalism was equalled only by his sense of realism. This is the context that we have to bear in mind while dealing with the recurring controversy about Rai's communalism.<sup>2</sup> A biased observer could easily mistake Lajpat Rai's views for crass communalism. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that his reformist zeal was not confined

to Hindus alone but was visible even in relation to the Muslims.

The utmost that could be said of him was that he was pro-Hindu *but not anti-Muslim*. He was genuinely interested in safeguarding the natural and legitimate interest of the Hindus<sup>3</sup>, but in pursuing this aim he was not opposed to the just rights and privileges of the Muslims. Again, if he favoured a policy of firmness it was in relation to both the communities and not exclusively in relation to either of them. If Lajpat Rai criticised the Muslims he also chided the Hindus. And he always condemned the evils of Hinduism like caste and untouchability in the strongest terms. His proposed scheme of the partition of the country was a counsel of despair. And it should be viewed as the inevitable culmination of communal politics as he saw it. He was against partition and yet he put forth the scheme because he was absolutely convinced of its inevitability. As borne out by subsequent developments his prescription was almost prophetic. It is not a fair assessment to say that he *propagated* the scheme of partition. Lajpat Rai wanted to avoid the partition and in the light of the subsequent developments of Indian nationalism his suggestion should rightly be treated only as a prophetic warning. Again it was Lajpat Rai's firmness and sense of justice that made him critical of appeasement as a policy for solving communal differences. In fact, the actual partition of India in 1947 could safely be regarded as a consequence of this policy of appeasement. What Lajpat Rai wanted was not appeasement but firmness in resolving communal problems fearlessly. Unfortunately, Lajpat Rai's stand on question of communal politics has not been properly understood nor appreciated. In his concept and philosophy of nationalism, communalism had no place at all. The charge that Lajpat Rai was a political extremist but a religious conservative was absolutely baseless. He was for strengthening the spirit of Indian nationalism with an admixture of religious fervour but not for debasing either nationalism or religion. Here it is pertinent to recall the famous remark of Renan that "the idea of Nationalism is essentially spiritual in character".<sup>4</sup> This religious impulse of nationalism was nurtured assiduously by Indian Nationalists like Tilak, Aurobindo and Gandhi.

Along with Tilak and Aurobindo, Lajpat Rai enriched the spiritual content of Indian Nationalism. His historic speeches

and writings, which invariably breathe a national spirit remind us of Vivekanand who promoted the great ideal of the Indian Soul through spoken and written words. If this task required occasional revivalism, it must also be maintained that revivalism played a political role in the rise of Nationalism in India. This view is now hardly repudiated and is to be found in the writings of contemporary scholars on nationalism.<sup>5</sup>

Lajpat Rai displayed consistent concern for the improvement of social relations. He always advocated social reform but never through alien methods. He was for an indigenous social order. And he wanted to link social progress with the pursuit of *Dharma*. His services to education were memorable. He was a pioneer in propagating the idea of National Education. On social questions Lajpat Rai had a progressive social outlook. So much was conceded by Nehru<sup>6</sup> even. As such the notion that he was socially a conservative is contrary to facts.

On economic problems, Lajpat Rai again displayed a remarkably practical and progressive outlook. He wanted to steer clear of extreme ideologies and promote economic prosperity through self-reliance. He was also one of the earliest advocates of *Swadeshi*—a principle which was greatly propagated by subsequent national leaders.

His interest in trade unionism is now a matter of history. He represented India in the International Conference of Labour. To say that he belonged to the *right* in economics and did not favour *left* is another fallacy. He was undoubtedly *left* in economics, though he supported native capital enterprise in banking and business. Lajpat Rai had to do this mainly for political reasons. A subject of India could not become economically self-reliant without exploiting all its economic resources. There can be little doubt that he did not want India to be under foreign economic domination at any time.

Lajpat Rai's concept of nationalism was notable for its Indianness and dynamism. He completely dismissed all claims of sub-nationalism, either of language or region. His nationalism was not an exclusive one either. It was tempered with internationalism.

Though Lajpat Rai welcomed the assistance of foreign nations for Indian liberation he never approved of any foreign power directly assisting India for the achievement of freedom.

In fact, he declined foreign assistance more than once. At the same time, he preached the ideal of the human family where all the nations would be an integral part of the whole.

The impact of Lajpat Rai's concept of nationalism on the subsequent developments of the Indian nationalist movement is patent. It is no mean tribute to Lajpat Rai's services to the Indian nation to find that almost all the aspects of post-Independent national life bear witness to his heritage. His ideals of secularism, democracy and socialism have been incorporated in the Indian Constitution and recent political and economic programmes. So far as his crusade against untouchability is concerned even Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, stands indebted to him. And if some of the aspects of our national life seem to diverge from Lajpat Rai's vision of Indian nationalism, it is because the contemporary national life has not yet fully imbibed the spirit of Lajpat Rai's nationalism. In saying that nation is superior to state, Lajpat Rai propounded the idea of supra-political nationalism—a nationalism that was not bound by political frontiers.

Lajpat Rai gave to India an ideal of nationalism which is composite, constructive and creative. He vigorously fought against all forces of disunity, fanaticism and groupism which poison the spring of nationalism. His contribution to Indian nationalist thought was, in short, as significant as it was lasting.

## NOTES

1. History of the Indian National Congress, Vol I, op. cit., p. 103.
2. See Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 158.
3. Clifford Manshardt holds that one should "seek to cultivate all that is best in his culture and tradition."
- See Moin Shakir, *Khilafat to Partition*, (Kalamkar Prakashan, New Delhi, 1970), p. 271.
- 4 Quoted in H.J Laski, *A Grammar of Politics*, (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1948), p. 219.
5. See Hanskohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East*, op. cit., p.349.
6. *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 72.

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